





“Spare him, for the love of that God you worship!—Spare him!”
—*Lionel Lincoln*, page 122.

LIONEL LINCOLN

OR

THE LEAGUER OF BOSTON

BY

J. FENIMORE COOPER

"First let me talk with this philosopher"

NEW YORK

JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY

150 WORTH STREET, CORNER MISSION PLACE

TROW'S
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,
NEW YORK.

NRLF
PS
1409
L4
1800

TO
WILLIAM JAY,
OF
BEDFORD, WEST-CHESTER,
ESQUIRE.

MY DEAR JAY,

An unbroken intimacy of four-and-twenty years may justify the present use of your name. A man of readier wit than myself might, on such a subject, find an opportunity of saying something clever, concerning the exalted services of your father. No weak testimony of mine, however, can add to a fame that belongs already to posterity : and one like myself, who has so long known the merits, and has so often experienced the friendship of the son, can find even better reasons for offering these Legends to your notice.

Very truly and constantly,

Yours,

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE manner in which the author became possessed of the private incidents, the characters, and the descriptions, contained in these tales, will, most probably, ever remain a secret between himself and his publisher. That the leading events are true, he presumes it is unnecessary to assert ; for should inherent testimony, to prove that important point, be wanting, he is conscious that no anonymous declaration can establish its credibility.

But while he shrinks from directly yielding his authorities, the author has no hesitation in furnishing all the negative testimony in his power.

In the first place, then, he solemnly declares, that no unknown man, nor woman, has ever died in his vicinity, of whose effects he has become the possessor, by either fair means or foul. No dark-looking stranger, of a morbid temperament, and of inflexible silence, has ever transmitted to him a single page of illegible manuscript. Nor has any landlord furnished him with materials to be worked up into a book, in order that the profits might go to discharge the arrearages of a certain consumptive lodger, who made his exit so unceremoniously as to leave the last item in his account, his funeral charges.

He is indebted to no garrulous tale-teller for beguiling the long winter evenings ; in ghosts, he has no faith ; he never had a vision in his life ; and he sleeps too soundly to dream.

He is constrained to add, that in no "puff," "squib," "notice," "article," nor "review," whether in daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly publication, has he been able to find a single hint that his humble powers could improve. No one regrets this fatality more than himself ; for these writers generally bring such a weight of imagination to their several tasks, that, properly improved, might secure the immortality of any book, by rendering it unintelligible.

He boldly asserts that he has derived no information from any of the learned societies—and without fear of contradiction ; for why should one so obscure be the exclusive object of their favors !

Notwithstanding he occasionally is seen in that erudite and abstemious association, the “ Bread - and - Cheese Lunch,” where he is elbowed by lawyers, doctors, jurists, poets, painters, editors, congressmen, and authors of every shade and qualification, whether metaphysical, scientific, or imaginative, he avers, that he esteems the lore which is there culled, as far too sacred to be used in any work less dignified than actual history.

Of the colleges it is necessary to speak with reverence ; though truth possesses claims even superior to gratitude. He shall dispose of them by simply saying, that they are entirely innocent of all his blunders ; the little they bestowed having long since been forgotten.

He has stolen no images from the deep, natural poetry of Bryant ! no pungency from the wit of Halleck ; no felicity of expression from the richness of Percival ; no satire from the caustic pen of Paulding ; no periods nor humor from Irving ; nor any high finish from the attainments exhibited by Verplanck.

At the “ soirées ” and “ coteries des bas bleus ” he did think he had obtained a prize, in the dandies of literature, who haunt them. But experiment and analysis detected his error ; as they proved these worthies unfit for any better purpose than that which their own instinct had already dictated.

He has made no impious attempt to rob Joe Miller of his jokes ; the sentimentalists of their pathos ; nor the newspaper Homers of their lofty inspirations.

His presumption has not even imagined the vivacity of the eastern states ; he has not analyzed the homogeneous character of the middle ; and he has left the south in the undisturbed possession of all their saturnine wit.

In short—he has pilfered from no black-letter book, nor any six-penny pamphlet ; his grandmother unnaturally refused her assistance to his labors ; and, to speak affirmatively, for once, he wishes to live in peace, and hopes to die in the fear of God.

INTRODUCTION.

IN this tale there are one or two slight anachronisms: which, if unnoticed, might, with literal readers, draw some unpleasant imputations on its veracity—They relate rather to persons than to things. As they are believed to be quite in character, connected with circumstances much more probable than facts, and to possess all the harmony of poetic coloring, the author is utterly unable to discover the reason why they are not true.

He leaves the knotty point to the instinctive sagacity of the critics.

The matter of this "Legend" may be pretty equally divided into that which is publicly, and that which is privately certain. For the authorities of the latter, the author refers to the foregoing preface; but he cannot dispose of the sources whence he has derived the former, with so little ceremony.

The good people of Boston are aware of the creditable appearance they make in the early annals of the confederation, and they neglect no commendable means to perpetuate the glories of their ancestors. In consequence, the inquiry after historical facts, is answered, there, by an exhibition of local publications, that no other town in the Union can equal. Of these means the author has endeavored to avail himself; collating with care, and selecting, as he trusts, with some of that knowledge of men and things which is necessary to present a faithful picture.

Wherever he may have failed, he has done it honestly.

He will not take leave of the "cradle of liberty," without expressing his thanks for the facilities which have been so freely accorded to his undertaking. If he has not been visited by aerial beings, and those fair visions that poets best love to create, he is certain he will not be misconceived when he says, that he has been honored by the notice of some resembling those, who first inspired their fancies.



LIONEL LINCOLN;

OR, THE LEAGUER OF BOSTON.

CHAPTER I.

“ My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.”—GRAY.

No American can be ignorant of the principal events that induced the Parliament of Great Britain, in 1774, to lay those impolitic restrictions on the port of Boston, which so effectually destroyed the trade of the chief town in her western colonies. Nor should it be unknown to any American, how nobly, and with what devotedness to the great principles of the controversy, the inhabitants of the adjacent town of Salem refused to profit by the situation of their neighbors and fellow-subjects. In consequence of these impolitic measures of the English government, and of the laudable unanimity among the capitalists of the times, it became a rare sight to see the canvas of any other vessels than such as wore the pennants of the king, whitening the forsaken waters of Massachussetts Bay.

Toward the decline of a day in April, 1775, however, the eyes of hundreds had been fastened on a distant sail, which was seen rising from the bosom of the waves, making her way along the forbidden track, and steering directly for the mouth of the proscribed haven. With that deep solicitude in passing events which marked the period, a large group of spectators was collected on Beacon Hill, spreading from its conical summit far down the eastern declivity, all gazing intently on the object of their common interest. In so large an assemblage, however, there

were those who were excited by very different feelings, and indulging in wishes directly opposite to each other. While the decent, grave, but wary citizen was endeavoring to conceal the bitterness of the sensations which soured his mind, under the appearance of a cold indifference, a few gay young men, who mingled in the throng, bearing about their persons the trappings of their martial profession, were loud in their exultations, and hearty in their congratulations on the prospect of hearing from their distant homes and absent friends. But the long, loud rolls of the drums, ascending on the evening air, from the adjacent common, soon called these idle spectators, in a body, from the spot, when the hill was left to the quiet possession of those who claimed the strongest right to its enjoyment. It was not, however, a period for open and unreserved communications. Long before the mists of evening had succeeded the shadows thrown from the setting sun, the hill was entirely deserted; the remainder of the spectators having descended from the eminence, and held their several courses, singly, silent, and thoughtful, toward the rows of dusky roofs that covered the lowland, along the eastern side of the peninsula. Notwithstanding this appearance of apathy, rumor, which, in times of great excitement, ever finds means to convey its whisperings, when it dare not bruit its information aloud, was busy in circulating the unwelcome intelligence, that the stranger was the first of a fleet, bringing stores and reinforcements to an army already too numerous, and too confident of its power, to respect the law. No tumult or noise succeeded this unpleasant annunciation, but the doors of the houses were sullenly closed, and the windows darkened, as if the people intended to express their dissatisfaction, alone, by these silent testimonials of their disgust.

In the meantime the ship had gained the rocky entrance to the harbor, where, deserted by the breeze, and met by an adverse tide, she lay inactive, as if conscious of the unwelcome reception she must receive. The fears of the inhabitants of Boston had, however, exaggerated the danger; for the vessel, instead of exhibiting the confused and disorderly throng of licentious soldiery, which would have crowded a transport, was but thinly peopled, and her orderly decks were cleared of every incumbrance that could interfere with the comfort of those she did contain. There was an appearance, in the arrangements of her external accommodations, which would have indicated to an ob-

servant eye, that she carried those who claimed the rank, or possessed the means, of making others contribute largely to their comforts. The few seamen who navigated the ship lay extended on different portions of the vessel, watching the lazy sails as they flapped against the masts, or indolently bending their looks on the placid waters of the bay ; while several menials, in livery, crowded around a young man who was putting his eager inquiries to the pilot, that had just boarded the vessel off the Graves. The dress of this youth was studiously neat, and from the excessive pains bestowed on its adjustment, it was obviously deemed, by its wearer, to be in the height of the prevailing customs. From the place where this inquisitive party stood, nigh the main-mast, a wide sweep of the quarter-deck was untenanted ; but nearer to the spot where the listless seaman hung idly over the tiller of the ship, stood a being of altogether different mould and fashion. He was a man who would have seemed in the very extremity of age, had not his quick, vigorous steps, and the glowing, rapid glances from his eyes, as he occasionally paced the deck, appeared to deny the usual indications of many years. His form was bowed, and attenuated nearly to emaciation. His hair, which fluttered a little wildly around his temples, was thin, and silvered to the whiteness of at least eighty winters. Deep furrows, like the lines of great age and long endured cares united, wrinkled his hollow cheeks, and rendered the bold haughty outline of his prominent features still more remarkable. He was clad in a simple and somewhat tarnished suit of modest gray, which bore about it the ill-concealed marks of long and neglected use. Whenever he turned his piercing look from the shores, he moved swiftly along the deserted quarter-deck, and seemed entirely engrossed with the force of his own thoughts, his lips moving rapidly, though no sounds were heard to issue from a mouth that was habitually silent. He was under the influence of one of those sudden impulses, in which the body, apparently, sympathized so keenly with the restless activity of the mind, when a young man ascended from the cabin and took his stand among the interested and excited gazers at the land, on the upper deck. The age of this gentleman might have been five and twenty. He wore a military cloak, thrown carelessly across his form, which, in addition to such parts of his dress as were visible through its open folds, sufficiently announced that his profession was that of arms. There was an air of ease and

high fashion gleaming about his person, though his speaking countenance, at times, seemed melancholy, if not sad. On gaining the deck, this young officer, encountering the eyes of the aged and restless being who trod its planks, bowed courteously before he turned away to the view, and in his turn became deeply absorbed in studying its fading beauties.

The rounded heights of Dorchester were radiant with the rays of the luminary that had just sunk behind their crest, and streaks of paler light were playing along the waters, and gilding the green summits of the islands which clustered across the mouth of the estuary. Far in the distance were to be seen the tall spires of the churches, rising out of the deep shadows of the town, with their vanes glittering in the sunbeams, while a few rays of strong light were dancing about the black beacon, which reared itself high above the conical peak, that took its name from the circumstance of supporting this instrument of alarms. Several large vessels were anchored among the islands and before the town, their dark hulls, at each moment, becoming less distinct through the haze of evening, while the summits of their long lines of masts were yet glowing with the marks of day. From each of these sullen ships, from the low fortification which rose above a small island deep in the bay, and from various elevations in the town itself, the broad, silky folds of the flag of England were yet waving in the currents of the passing air. The young man was suddenly aroused from gazing at this scene, by the quick reports of the evening guns, and while his eyes were yet tracing the descent of the proud symbols of the British power from their respective places of display, he felt his arm convulsively pressed by the hand of his aged fellow-passenger.

"Will the day ever arrive," said a low, hollow voice at his elbow, "when those flags shall be lowered, never to rise again in this hemisphere!"

The young soldier turned his quick eyes to the countenance of the speaker, but bent them instantly in embarrassment on the deck, to avoid the keen, searching glance he encountered in the looks of the other. A long, and, on the part of the young man, a painful silence succeeded this remark. At length the youth, pointing to the land, said—

"Tell me, you who are of Boston, and must have known it so long, the names of all these beautiful places I see."

"And are you not of Boston, too?" asked his old companion.

"Certainly by birth, but an Englishman by habit and education."

"Accursed be the habits, and neglected the education, which would teach a child to forget its parentage!" muttered the old man, turning suddenly, and walking away so rapidly as to be soon lost in the forward parts of the ship.

For several minutes longer the youth stood absorbed in his own musings, when, as if recollecting his previous purposes, he called aloud—"Meriton!"

At the sounds of his voice the curious group around the pilot instantly separated, and the highly ornamented youth, before mentioned, approached the officer, with a manner in which pert familiarity and fearful respect were peculiarly blended. Without regarding the air of the other, however, or indeed without even favoring him with a glance, the young soldier continued—

"I desired you to detain the boat which boarded us, in order to convey me to the town, Mr. Meriton; see if it be in readiness."

The valet flew to execute this commission, and in an instant returned with a reply in the affirmative.

"But, sir," he continued, "you will never think of going in that boat, I feel very much assured, sir."

"Your assurance, Mr. Meriton, is not the least of your recommendations; why should I not?"

"That disagreeable old stranger has taken possession of it, with his mean, filthy bundle of rags; and——"

"And what? you must name a greater evil, to detain me here, than mentioning the fact that the only gentleman in the ship is to be my companion."

"Lord, sir!" said Meriton, glancing his eye upward in amazement; "but, sir, surely you know best as to gentility of behavior—but as to gentility of dress——"

"Enough of this," interrupted his master, a little angrily; "the company is such as I am content with; if you find it unequal to your deserts, you have my permission to remain in the ship until the morning—the presence of a coxcomb is by no means necessary to my comfort for one night."

Without regarding the mortification of his disconcerted valet, the young man passed along the deck to the place where the boat was in waiting. By the general movement

among the indolent menials, and the profound respect with which he was attended by the master of the ship to the gangway, it was sufficiently apparent, that, notwithstanding his youth, it was this gentleman whose presence had exacted those arrangements in the ship, which have been mentioned. While all around him, however, were busy in facilitating the entrance of the officer into the boat, the aged stranger occupied its principal seat, with an air of deep abstraction, if not of cool indifference. A hint from the pliant Meriton, who had ventured to follow his master, that it would be more agreeable if he would relinquish his place, was disregarded, and the youth took a seat by the side of the old man, with a simplicity of manner that his valet inwardly pronounced abundantly degrading. As if this humiliation were not sufficient, the young man, perceiving that a general pause had succeeded his own entrance, turned to his companion, and courteously inquired if he were ready to proceed. A silent wave of the hand was the reply, when the boat shot away from the vessel, leaving the ship steering for an anchorage in Nan-tasket.

The measured dash of the oars was uninterrupted by any voice, while, stemming the tide, they pulled laboriously up among the islands; but by the time they had reached the castle, the twilight had melted into the softer beams from a young moon, and the surrounding objects becoming more distinct, the stranger commenced talking with that quick and startling vehemence which seemed his natural manner. He spoke of the localities, with the vehemence and fondness of an enthusiast, and with the familiarity of one who had long known their beauties. His rapid utterance, however, ceased as they approached the naked wharves, and he sunk back gloomily in the boat, as if unwilling to trust his voice on the subject of his country's wrongs. Thus left to his own thoughts, the youth gazed, with eager interest, at the long ranges of buildings, which were now clearly visible to the eye, though with softer colors and more gloomy shadows. A few neglected and dismantled ships were lying at different points; but the hum of business, the forests of masts, and the rattling of wheels, which at that early hour should have distinguished the great mart of the colonies, were wanting. In their places were to be heard, at intervals, the sudden bursts of distant, martial music, the riotous merriment of the soldiery who frequented the taverns at

the water's edge, or the sullen challenges of the sentinels from the vessels of war, as they vexed the progress of the few boats, which the inhabitants still used in their ordinary pursuits.

"Here indeed is a change!" the young officer exclaimed, as they glided swiftly along this desolate scene; "even my recollections, young and fading as they are, recall the difference!"

The stranger made no reply, but a smile of singular meaning gleamed across his wan features, imparting, by the moonlight, to their remarkable expression, a character of additional wildness. The officer was again silent, nor did either speak until the boat, having shot by the end of the long wharf, across whose naked boundaries a sentinel was pacing his measured path, inclined more to the shore, and soon reached the place of its destination.

Whatever might have been the respective feelings of the two passengers, at having thus reached in safety the object of their tiresome and protracted voyage, they were not expressed in language. The old man bared his silver locks, and, concealing his face with his hat, stood as if in deep mental thanksgiving at the termination of his toil, while his more youthful companion trod the wharf on which they landed with the air of a man whose emotions were too engrossing for the ordinary use of words.

"Here we must part, sir," the officer at length said; "but I trust the acquaintance, which has been thus accidentally formed between us, is not to be forgotten now there is an end to our common privations."

"It is not in the power of a man whose days, like mine, are numbered," returned the stranger, "to mock the liberality of his God, by any vain promises that must depend on time for their fulfilment. I am one, young gentleman, who has returned from a sad, sad pilgrimage, in the other hemisphere, to lay his bones in this, his native land; but should many hours be granted me, you will hear further of the man whom your courtesy and kindness have so greatly obliged."

The officer was sensibly affected by the softened but solemn manner of his companion, and pressed his wasted hand fervently as he answered—

"Do; I ask it as a singular favor; I know not why, but you have obtained a command of my feelings that no other being ever yet possessed—and yet—'tis a mystery, 'tis like a dream! I feel that I not only venerate, but love you!"

The old man stepped back, and held the youth at the length of his arm for a moment, while he fastened on him a look of glowing interest, and then, raising his hand slowly, he pointed impressively upward, and said—

“’Tis from heaven, and for God’s own purposes—smother not the sentiment, boy, but cherish it in your heart’s core !”

The reply of the youth was interrupted by sudden and violent shrieks, that burst rudely on the stillness of the place, chilling the very blood of those who heard them, with their piteousness. The quick and severe blows of a lash were blended with the exclamations of the sufferer, and rude oaths, with hoarse execrations, from various voices, were united in the uproar, which appeared to be at no great distance. By a common impulse, the whole party broke away from the spot, and moved rapidly up the wharf in the direction of the sounds. As they approached the buildings, a group was seen collected around the man, who thus broke the charm of evening by his cries, interrupting his wailings with their ribaldry, and encouraging his tormentors to proceed.

“Mercy, mercy, for the sake of the blessed God, have mercy, and don’t kill Job !” again shrieked the sufferer ; “Job will run your a’r’nds ! Job is half-witted ! Mercy on poor Job ! Oh ! you make his flesh creep !”

“I’ll cut the heart from the mutinous knave,” interrupted a hoarse, angry voice, “to refuse to drink the health of his majesty !”

“Job does wish him good health—Job loves the king—only Job don’t love rum.”

The officer had approached so nigh as to perceive that the whole scene was one of disorder and abuse, and pushing aside the crowd of excited and deriding soldiers, who composed the throng, he broke at once into the centre of the circle.

CHAPTER II.

“They’ll have me whipped for speaking true ;
Thou’lt have me whipped for lying ;
And sometimes I’m whipped for holding my peace.
I had rather be any kind of a thing
Than a fool.”—*Lear*.

“WHAT means this outcry ?” demanded the young man, arresting the arm of an infuriated soldier, who was inflicting the blows ; “by what authority is this man thus abused ?”

"By what authority dare you lay hands on a British grenadier?" cried the fellow, turning in his fury, and raising his lash against the supposed townsman. But when, as the officer stepped aside to avoid the threatened indignity, the light of the moon fell full upon his glittering dress, through the opening folds of his cloak, the arm of the brutal soldier was held suspended in air, with the surprise of the discovery.

"Answer, I bid you," continued the young officer, his frame shaking with passion; "why is this man tormented, and of what regiment are ye?"

"We belong to the grenadiers of the brave 47th, your honor," returned one of the bystanders, in a humble, deprecating tone, "and we was just polishing this 'ere natural, because as he refuses to drink the health of his majesty."

"He's a scornful sinner, that don't fear his Maker," cried the man in duress, eagerly bending his face, down which big tears were rolling, towards his protector. "Job loves the king, but Job don't love rum!"

The officer turned away from the cruel spectacle, as he bid the men untie the prisoner. Knives and fingers were instantly put in requisition, and the man was liberated, and suffered to resume his clothes. During this operation, the tumult and bustle, which had so recently distinguished the riotous scene, were succeeded by a stillness that rendered the hard breathing of the sufferer painfully audible.

"Now sirs, you heroes of the 47th!" said the young man, when the victim of their rage was again clad, "know you this button?" The soldier, to whom this question was more particularly addressed, gazed at the extended arm, and, to his vast discomfiture, he beheld the magical number of his own regiment reposing on the well-known white facings that decorated the rich scarlet of the vestment. No one presumed to answer this appeal, and after an impressive silence of a few moments, he continued—

"Ye are noble supporters of the well-earned fame of 'Wolfe's own!' fit successors to the gallant men who conquered under the walls of Quebec! away with ye; to-morrow it shall be looked to."

"I hope your honor will remember he refused his majesty's health. I'm sure, sir, that if Colonel Nesbitt was here himself——"

"Dog! do you dare to hesitate! go, while you have permission to depart."

The disconcerted soldiery, whose turbulence had thus

vanished, as if by enchantment, before the frown of their superior, slunk away in a body, a few of the older men whispering to their comrades the name of the officer, who had thus unexpectedly appeared in the midst of them. The angry eye of the young soldier followed their retiring forms, while a man of them was visible ; after which, turning to an elderly citizen, who, supported on a crutch, had been a spectator of the scene, he asked—

“Know you the cause of the cruel treatment this poor man has received ? or what in any manner has led to the violence ?”

“The boy is weak,” returned the cripple ; “quite an innocent, who knows but little good, but does no harm. The soldiers have been carousing in yonder dram-shop, and they often get the poor lad in with them, and sport with his infirmity. If these sorts of doings an’t checked, I fear much trouble will grow out of them ! Hard laws from t’other side of the water, and tarring and feathering on this, with gentlemen like Colonel Nesbitt at their head, will——”

“It is wisest for us, my friend, to pursue this subject no further,” interrupted the officer. “I belong myself to ‘Wolfe’s own,’ and will endeavor to see justice done in the matter ; as you will credit when I tell you that I am a Boston boy. But, though a native, a long absence has obliterated the marks of the town from my memory ; and I am at a loss to thread these crooked streets. Know you the dwelling of Mrs. Lechmere ?”

“The house is well known to all in Boston,” returned the cripple, in a voice sensibly altered by the information that he was speaking to a townsman. “Job, here, does but little else than run of errands, and he will show you the way out of gratitude ; won’t you, Job ?”

The idiot,—for the vacant eye and unmeaning boyish countenance of the young man who had just been liberated but too plainly indicated that he was to be included in that miserable class of human beings,—answered with a caution and reluctance that were a little remarkable, considering the recent circumstances.

“Ma’am Lechmere’s ! Oh ! yes, Job knows the way, and could go there blindfolded, if—if——”

“If what, you simpleton !” exclaimed the zealous cripple.

“Why, if ’twas daylight.”

“Blindfolded, and daylight ! do but hear the silly child !

Come, Job, you must take this gentleman to Tremont Street, without further words. 'Tis but just sundown, boy, and you can go there and be home and in your bed before the Old South strikes eight!"

"Yes; that all depends on which way you go," returned the reluctant changeling. "Now, I know, neighbor Hopper, you couldn't go to Ma'am Lechmere's in an hour, if you went along Lynn Street, and so along Prince Street, and back through Snow-Hill; and especially if you should stop any time to look at the graves on Copp's."

"Pshaw! the fool is in one of his sulks now, with his Copp's-Hill, and the graves!" interrupted the cripple, whose heart had warmed to his youthful townsman, and who would have volunteered to show the way himself, had his infirmities permitted the exertion. "The gentleman must call the grenadiers back, to bring the child to reason."

"'Tis quite unnecessary to be harsh with the unfortunate lad," said the young soldier; "my recollections will probably aid me as I advance; and should they not, I can inquire of any passenger I meet."

"If Boston was what Boston has been, you might ask such a question of a civil inhabitant, at any corner," said the cripple; "but it's rare to see many of our people in the streets at this hour, since the massacre. Besides, it is Saturday night, you know; a fit time for these rioters to choose for their revelries! For that matter, the soldiers have grown more insolent than ever, since they have met that disappointment about the cannon down at Salem; but I needn't tell such as you what the soldiers are when they get a little savage."

"I know my comrades but indifferently well, if their conduct to-night be any specimen of their ordinary demeanor, sir," returned the officer; "but follow, Meriton; I apprehend no great difficulty in our path."

The pliant valet lifted the cloak-bag he carried, from the ground, and they were about to proceed, when the natural edged himself in a sidelong, slovenly manner, nigher to the gentleman, and looked earnestly up in his face for a moment, where he seemed to be gathering confidence to say—"Job will show the officer Ma'am Lechmere's, if the officer won't let the grannies catch Job afore he gets off the North End ag'in."

"Ah!" said the young man, laughing, "there is something of the cunning of a fool in that arrangement. Well,

I accept the conditions ; but beware how you take me to contemplate the graves by moonlight, or I shall deliver you not only to the grannies, but to the light infantry, artillery, and all."

With this good-natured threat, the officer followed his nimble conductor, after taking a friendly leave of the obliging cripple, who continued his admonitions to the natural, not to wander from the direct route, while the sounds of his voice were audible to the retiring party. The progress of his guide was so rapid as to require the young officer to confine his survey of the narrow and crooked streets through which they passed, to extremely hasty and imperfect glances. No very minute observation, however, was necessary to perceive that he was led along one of the most filthy and inferior sections of the town ; and where, notwithstanding his efforts, he found it impossible to recall a single feature of his native place to his remembrance. The complaints of Meriton, who followed close at the heels of his master, were loud and frequent, until the gentleman, a little doubting the sincerity of his intractable conductor, exclaimed—

"Have you nothing better than this to show a townsman, who has been absent seventeen years, on his return? Pray let us go through some better streets than this, if any there are in Boston which can be called better."

The lad stopped short, and looked up in the face of the speaker, for an instant, with an air of undisguised amazement, and then, without replying, he changed the direction of his route, and after one or two more deviations in his path, suddenly turning again, he glided up an alley, so narrow that the passenger might touch the buildings on either side of him. The officer hesitated an instant to enter this dark and crooked passage, but perceiving that his guide was already hid by a bend in the houses, he quickened his steps, and immediately regained the ground he had lost. They soon emerged from the obscurity of the place, and issued on a street of greater width.

"There!" said Job, triumphantly, when they had effected this gloomy passage, "does the king live in so crooked and narrow a street as that?"

"His majesty must yield the point in your favor," returned the officer.

"Ma'am Lechmere is a grand lady!" continued the lad, seemingly following the current of his own fanciful conceits, "and she wouldn't live in that alley for the world,

though it is narrow, like the road to heaven, as old Nab says ; I suppose they call it after the Methodies for that reason."

"I have heard the road you mention termed narrow, certainly, but it is also called *strait*," returned the officer, a little amused with the humor of the lad ; "but forward, the time is slipping away, and we loiter."

Again Job turned, and moving onward, he led the way, with swift steps, along another narrow and crooked path, which, however, better deserved the name of a street, under the projecting stories of the wooden buildings, which lined its sides. After following the irregular windings of their route for some distance, they entered a triangular area, of a few rods in extent, where Job, disregarding the use of the narrow walk, advanced directly into the centre of the open space. Here he stopped once more, and, turning his vacant face with an air of much seriousness, towards a building which composed one side of the triangle, he said, with a voice that expressed his own deep admiration—

"There—that's the 'Old North !' did you ever see such a meetin'us' afore ? does the king worship God in such a temple ?"

The officer did not chide the idle liberties of the fool, for in the antiquated and quaint architecture of the wooden edifice he recognized one of those early efforts of the simple, puritan builders, whose rude tastes have been transmitted to their posterity with so many deviations in the style of the same school, but so little of improvement. Blended with these considerations, were the dawns of revived recollections ; and he smiled, as he recalled the time when he also used to look up at the building with feelings somewhat allied to the profound admiration of the idiot. Job watched his countenance narrowly, and easily mistaking its expression, he extended his arm toward one of the narrowest of the avenues that entered the area, where stood a few houses of more than common pretension.

"And there ag'in !" he continued, "there's palaces for you ! stingy Tommy lived in the one with the pile-axters, and the flowers hanging to their tops ; and see the crowns on them too ! stingy Tommy loved crowns, they say ; but Province'us' wasn't good enough for him, and he lived here—now they say he lives in one of the king's cup-boards !"

"And who was stingy Tommy ? and what right had he to dwell in Province-House, if he would ?"

"What right has any governor to live in Province'us'! because it's the king's! though the people paid for it."

"Pray, sir, excuse me," said Meriton, from behind, "but do the Americans usually call all their governors stingy Tommies?"

The officer turned his head, at this vapid question, from his valet, and perceived that he had been accompanied thus far by the aged stranger, who stood at his elbow, leaning on his staff, studying with close attention the late dwelling of Hutchinson, while the light of the moon fell, unobstructed, on the deep lines of his haggard face. During the first surprise of this discovery, he forgot to reply, and Job took the vindication of his language into his own hands.

"To be sure they do—they call people by their right names," he said. "Insygn Peck is called Insygn Peck; and you call Deacon Winslow anything but Deacon Winslow, and see what a look he'll give you! and I am Job Pray, so called; and why shouldn't a governor be called stingy Tommy, if he is a stingy Tommy?"

"Be careful how you speak lightly of the king's representative," said the young officer, raising his light cane with the affectation of correcting the changeling.—"Forget you that I am a soldier?"

The idiot shrunk back a little, timidly, and then leering from under his sunken brow, he answered—

"I heard you say you were a Boston boy!"

The gentleman was about to make a playful reply, when the aged stranger passed quickly before him, and took his stand at the side of the lad, with a manner so remarkable for its earnestness, that it entirely changed the current of his thoughts.

"The young man knows the ties of blood and country," the stranger muttered, "and I honor him!"

It might have been the sudden recollection of the danger of those allusions, which the officer so well understood, and to which his accidental association with the singular being who uttered them had begun to familiarize his ear, that induced the youth to resume his walk, silently, and in deep thought, along the street. By this movement, he escaped observing the cordial grasp of the hand which the old stranger bestowed on the idiot, while he muttered a few more terms of commendation. Job soon took his station in front, and the whole party moved on again, though with less rapid strides. As the lad advanced deeper into the

town, he evidently wavered once or twice in his choice of streets, and the officer began to suspect, that the change-ling contemplated one of his wild circuits, to avoid the direct route to a house that he manifestly approached with great reluctance. Once or twice the young soldier looked about him, intending to inquire the direction, of the first passenger he might see ; but the quiet of deep night already pervaded the place, and not an individual, but those who accompanied him, appeared in the long ranges of streets they had passed. The air of the guide was becoming so dogged, and hesitating, that his follower had just determined to make an application at one of the doors, when they emerged from a dark, dirty, and gloomy street on an open space, of much greater extent than the one they had so recently left. Passing under the walls of a blackened dwelling, Job led the way to the centre of a swinging bridge, which was thrown across an inlet from the harbor, that extended a short distance, into the area, forming a shallow dock. Here he took his stand, and allowed the view of the surrounding objects to work its own effect on those he had conducted thither. The square was composed of rows of low, gloomy, and irregular houses, most of which had the appearance of being but little used. Stretching from the end of the basin, and a little on one side, a long, narrow edifice, ornamented with pilasters, perforated with arched windows, and surmounted by a humble cupola, reared its walls of brick, under the light of the moon. The story which held the rows of silent, glistening windows, was supported on abutments and arches of the same material, through the narrow vistas of which were to be seen the shambles of the common market-place. Heavy cornices of stone were laid above and beneath the pilasters, and something more than the unskilful architecture of the dwelling houses they had passed, was affected throughout the whole structure. While the officer gazed at this scene, the idiot watched his countenance with a keenness exceeding his usual observation, until, impatient at hearing no words of pleasure or of recognition, he exclaimed—

“If you don't know Funnel Hall, you are no Boston boy !”

“But I do know Faneuil Hall, and I am a Boston boy,” returned the amused gentleman ; “the place begins to freshen on my memory, and I now recall the scenes of my childhood.”

"This, then," said the aged stranger, "is the spot where liberty has found so many bold advocates!"

"It would do the king's heart good to hear the people talk in old Funnel, sometimes," said Job. "I was on the cornishes, and looked into the winders, the last town-meetin'-da', and if there was soldiers on the Common, there was them in the hall that didn't care for them!"

"All this is very amusing, no doubt," said the officer, gravely, "but it does not advance me a foot on my way to Mrs. Lechmere's."

"It is also instructing," exclaimed the stranger; "go on, child; I love to hear his simple feelings thus expressed; they indicate the state of the public mind."

"Why," said Job, "they were plain spoken, that's all; and it would be better for the king to come over, and hear them—it would pull down his pride, and make him pity the people, and then he wouldn't think of shutting up Boston harbor. Suppose he should stop the water from coming in by the Narrows, why, we should get it by Broad Sound! and if it didn't come by Broad Sound it would by Nantasket! He needn't think that the Boston folks are so dumb as to be cheated out of God's water by acts of Parliament, while old Funnel stands in the Dock Square!"

Sirrah!" exclaimed the officer, a little angrily, "we have already loitered until the clocks are striking eight."

The idiot lost his animation, and lowered in his looks again, as he answered—

"Well, I told neighbor Hopper there was more ways to Ma'am Lechmere's than straight forward! but everybody knows Job's business better than Job himself! now you make me forget the road; let us go in and ask old Nab; she knows the way too well!"

"Old Nab! you wilful dolt! who is Nab, and what have I to do with any but yourself?"

"Everybody in Boston knows Abigail Pray."

"What of her?" asked the startling voice of the stranger; "what of Abigail Pray, boy; is she not honest?"

"Yes, as poverty can make her," returned the natural, gloomily; "now the king has said there shall be no goods but tea sent to Boston, and the people won't have the bohea, it's easy living rent-free.—Nab keeps her huckster-stuff in the old ware'us', and a good place it is too—Job and his mother have each a room to sleep in, and they say the king and queen haven't more!"

While he was speaking, the eyes of his listeners were

drawn by his gestures toward the singular edifice to which he alluded. Like most of the others adjacent to the square, it was low, old, dirty, and dark. Its shape was triangular, a street bounding it on each side, and its extremities were flanked by as many low hexagonal towers, which terminated, like the main building itself, in high pointed roofs, tiled, and capped with rude ornaments. Long ranges of small windows were to be seen in the dusky walls, through one of which the light of a solitary candle was glimmering, the only indication of the presence of life about the silent and gloomy building.

"Nab knows Ma'am Lechmere better than Job," continued the idiot, after a moment's pause, "and she will know whether Ma'am Lechmere will have Job whipped for bringing company on Saturday night ; though they say she's so full of scoffery as to talk, drink tea, and laugh on that night, just the same as any other time."

"I will pledge myself to her courteous treatment," the officer replied, beginning to be weary of the fool's delay.

"Let us see this Abigail Pray," cried the aged stranger, suddenly seizing Job by the arm, and leading him, with a sort of irresistible power, toward the walls of the building, through one of the low doors of which they immediately disappeared.

Thus left on the bridge, with his valet, the young officer hesitated a single instant how to act ; but yielding to the secret and powerful interest, which the stranger had succeeded in throwing around all his movements and opinions, he bade Meriton await his return, and followed his guide and the old man into the cheerless habitation of the former. On passing the outer door, he found himself in a spacious, but rude apartment, which, from its appearance, as well as from the few articles of heavy but valueless merchandise it now contained, would seem to have been used once as a storehouse. The light drew his steps toward a room in one of the towers, where, as he approached its open door, he heard the loud, sharp tones of a woman's voice, exclaiming—

"Where have you been, graceless, this Saturday night ! tagging at the heels of the soldiers, or gazing at the men-of-war, with their ungodly fashions of music and revelry at such a time, I dare to say ! and you knew that a ship was in the bay, and that Madam Lechmere had desired me to send her the first notice of its arrival. Here have I been waiting for you to go up to Tremont Street since sundown,

with the news, and you are out of call—you, that know so well who it is she expects !”

“Don’t be cross to Job, mother, for the grannies have been cutting his back with cords, till the blood runs ! Ma’am Lechmere ! I do believe, mother, that Ma’am Lechmere has moved ; for I’ve been trying to find her house this hour, because there’s a gentleman who landed from the ship wanted Job to show him the way.”

“What means the ignorant boy !” exclaimed his mother.

“He alludes to me,” said the officer, entering the apartment ; “I am the person, if any, expected by Mrs. Lechmere, and have just landed from the Avon, of Bristol ; but your son has led me a circuitous path, indeed ; at one time he spoke of visiting the graves on Copp’s Hill.”

“Excuse the ignorant and witless child, sir,” exclaimed the matron, eyeing the young man keenly through her spectacles ; “he knows the way as well as to his own bed, but he is wilful at times. This will be a joyful night in Tremont Street ! So handsome, and so stately too ! Excuse me, young gentleman,” she added, raising the candle to his features with an evident unconsciousness of the act—“he has the sweet smile of the mother, and the terrible eye of his father ! God forgive us all our sins, and make us happier in another world than in this place of evil and wickedness !” As she muttered the latter words, the woman set aside her candle with an air of singular agitation. Each syllable, notwithstanding her secret intention, was heard by the officer, across whose countenance there passed a sudden gloom that doubled its sad expression. He, however, said—

“You know me, and my family, then ?”

“I was at your birth, young gentleman, and a joyful birth it was ! but Madam Lechmere waits for the news, and my unfortunate child shall speedily conduct you to her door ; she will tell you all that it is proper to know. Job, you Job, where are you getting to, in that corner ! take your hat, and show the gentleman to Tremont Street directly ; you know, my son, you love to go to Madam Lechmere’s !”

“Job would never go, if Job could help it,” muttered the sullen boy ; “and if Nab had never gone, ’twould have been better for her soul.”

“Do you dare, disrespectful viper !” exclaimed the angry quean, seizing, in the violence of her fury, the tongs, and threatening the head of her stubborn child.

"Woman, peace!" said a voice behind.

The dangerous weapon fell from the nerveless hand of the vixen, and the hues of her yellow and withered countenance changed to the whiteness of death. She stood motionless, for near a minute, as if riveted to the spot by a superhuman power, before she succeeded in muttering, "who speaks to me?"

"It is I," returned the stranger, advancing from the shadow of the door into the dim light of the candle; "a man who has numbered ages, and who knows, that as God loves him, so is he bound to love the children of his loins."

The rigid limbs of the woman lost their stability, in a tremor that shook every fibre in her body; she sunk in her chair, and her eyes rolled from the face of one visitor to that of the other, while her unsuccessful efforts to utter, denoted that she had temporarily lost the command of speech. Job stole to the side of the stranger, in this short interval, and looking up in his face piteously, he said—

"Don't hurt old Nab—read that good saying to her out of the Bible, and she'll never strike Job with the tongs ag'in; will you, mother? See her cup, where she hid it under the towel, when you came in! Ma'am Lechmere gives her the p'ison tea to drink, and then Nab is never so good to Job, as Job would be to mother, if mother was half-witted, and Job was old Nab."

The stranger considered the moving countenance of the boy, while he pleaded thus earnestly in behalf of his mother, with marked attention, and when he had done, he stroked the head of the natural compassionately, and said—

"Poor, imbecile child! God has denied the most precious of his gifts, and yet his spirit hovers around thee; for thou canst distinguish between austerity and kindness, and thou hast learnt to know good from evil. Young man, see you no moral in this dispensation? nothing which says that Providence bestows no gift in vain; while it points to the difference between the duty that is fostered by indulgence, and that which is extorted by power?"

The officer avoided the ardent looks of the stranger, and after an embarrassing pause of a moment, he expressed his readiness, to the reviving woman, to depart on his way. The matron, whose eye had never ceased to dwell on the features of the old man, since her faculties were restored, arose slowly, and in a feeble voice directed her son to show the road to Tremont Street. She had acquired, by long practice a manner that never failed to control, when

pies!" muttered the officer to himself.—"Here then is half a guinea, if you like gold better."

The natural continued kicking a stone about with his toes, without taking his hands from the pockets where he wore them ordinarily, with a sort of idle air, as he peered from under his slouched hat at this renewed offer, answering—

"You wouldn't let the grannies whip Job, and Job won't take your money."

"Well, boy, there is more of gratitude in that than a wiser man would always feel! Come, Meriton, I shall meet the poor fellow again, and will not forget this. I commission you to see the lad better dressed, in the beginning of the week."

"Lord, sir," said the valet, "if it is your pleasure, most certainly; but I declare I don't know in what style I should dress such a figure and countenance, to make anything of them!"

"Sir, sir," cried the lad, running a few steps after the officer, who had already proceeded, "if you won't let the grannies beat Job any more, Job will always show you the way through Boston; and run your a'r'nds too!"

"Poor fellow! well, I promise that you shall not be again abused by any of the soldiery. Good night, my honest friend—let me see you again."

The idiot appeared satisfied with this assurance, for he immediately turned, and gliding along the street with a sort of shuffling gait, he soon disappeared round the first corner. In the meantime the young officer advanced to the entrance which led into the court-yard of Mrs. Lechmere's dwelling. The house was of bricks, and of an exterior altogether more pretending than most of those in the lower parts of the town. It was heavily ornamented, in wood, according to the taste of a somewhat earlier day, and presented a front of seven windows in its two upper stories, those at the extremes being much narrower than the others. The lower floor had the same arrangement, with the exception of the principal door.

Strong lights were shining in many parts of the house, which gave it, in comparison with the gloomy and darkened edifices in its vicinity, an air of peculiar gayety and life. The rap of the gentleman was answered instantly by an old black, dressed in a becoming, and what, for the colonies, was a rich livery. The inquiry for Mrs. Lechmere was successful, and the youth was conducted through

a hall of some dimensions, into an apartment which opened from one of its sides. This room would be considered, at the present day, as much too small to contain the fashion of a country town ; but what importance it wanted in size, was amply compensated for in the richness and labor of its decorations. The walls were divided into compartments, by raised panel-work, beautifully painted with imaginary landscapes and ruins. The glittering, varnished surfaces of these pictures were burdened with armorial bearings, which were intended to illustrate the alliances of the family. Beneath the surbase were smaller divisions of panels, painted with various architectural devices ; and above it rose, between the compartments, fluted pilasters of wood with gilded capitals. A heavy wooden, and highly ornamented cornice, stretched above the whole, furnishing an appropriate outline to the walls. The use of carpets was, at that time, but little known in the colonies, though the wealth and station of Mrs. Lechmere would probably have introduced the luxury, had not her age, and the nature of the building, tempted her to adhere to ancient custom. The floor, which shone equally with the furniture, was tessellated with small alternate squares of red-cedar and pine, and in the centre were the "saliant Lions" of Lechmere, attempted by the blazonry of the joiner. On either side of the ponderous and labored mantel, were arched compartments, of plainer work, denoting use, the sliding panels of one of which, being raised, displayed a buffet, groaning with massive plate. The furniture was old, rich, and heavy, but in perfect preservation. In the midst of this scene of colonial splendor, which was rendered as impressive as possible by the presence of numerous waxen lights, a lady, far in the decline of life, sat, in formal propriety, on a small settee. The officer had thrown his cloak into the hands of Meriton, in the hall, and as he advanced up the apartment, his form appeared in the gay dress of a soldier, giving to its ease and fine proportions the additional charm of military garnish. The hard, severe eye of the lady, sensibly softened with pleased surprise, as it dwelt on his person for an instant after she arose to receive her guest ; but the momentary silence was first broken by the youth, who said—

"I have entered unannounced, for my impatience has exceeded my breeding, madam, while each step I have taken in this house recalls the days of my boyhood, and of my former freedom within its walls."

"My cousin Lincoln!" interrupted the lady, who was Mrs. Lechmere; "that dark eye, that smile, nay, your very step, announces you! I must have forgotten my poor brother, and one also who is still so dear to us, not to have known you a true Lincoln!"

There was a distance in the manner of both, at meeting which might easily have been imparted by the precise formula of the provincial school, of which the lady was so distinguished a member, but which was not sufficient to explain the sad expression that suddenly and powerfully blended with the young man's smile, as she spoke. The change, however, was but momentary, and he answered courteously to her assurances of recognition—

"I have long been taught to expect a second home in Tremont Street, and I find, by your flattering remembrance of myself and parents, dear madam, that my expectations are justified."

The lady was sensibly pleased at this remark, and she suffered a smile to unbend her rigid brow, as she answered—

"A home, certainly, though it be not such an one as the heir of the wealthy house of Lincoln may have been accustomed to dwell in. It would be strange, indeed, could any, allied to that honorable family, forget to entertain its representative with due respect."

The youth seemed conscious that quite as much had now been said as the occasion required, and he raised his head from bowing respectfully on her hand, with the intention of changing the subject to one less personal, when his eye caught a glimpse of the figure of another, and more youthful female, who had been concealed, hitherto, by the drapery of a window-curtain. Advancing to this young lady, he said, with a quickness that rather betrayed his willingness to suspend further compliment—

"And here I see one also, to whom I have the honor of being related; Miss Dynevor?"

"Though it be not my grand-child," said Mrs. Lechmere, "it is one who claims an equal affinity to you, Major Lincoln; it is Agnes Danforth, the daughter of my late niece."

"'Twas my eyes then, and not my feelings, that were mistaken," returned the young soldier; "I hope this lady will admit my claim to call her cousin?"

A simple inclination of the body was the only answer he received, though she did not decline the hand which he offered with his salutations. After a few more of the usual

expressions of pleasure, and the ordinary inquiries that succeed such meetings, the party became seated, and a more regular discourse followed.

"I am pleased to find you remember us, then, cousin Lionel," said Mrs. Lechmere; "we have so little in this remote province that will compare with the mother country, I had feared no vestiges of the place of your birth could remain on your mind."

"I find the town greatly altered, it is true, but there are many places in it which I still remember, though certainly their splendor is a little diminished, in my eyes, by absence and a familiarity with other scenes."

"Doubtless, an acquaintance with the British court will have no tendency to exalt our humble customs in your imagination; neither do we possess many buildings to attract the notice of a travelled stranger. There is a tradition in our family, that your seat in Devonshire is as large as any dozen edifices in Boston, public or private; nay, we are proud of saying, that the king himself is lodged as well as the head of the Lincoln family, only when at his castle of Windsor!"

"Ravenscliffe is certainly a place of some magnitude," returned the young man, carelessly, "though you will remember his Majesty affects but little state at Kew. I have, however, spent so little of my time in the country, that I hardly know its conveniences or its extent."

The old lady bowed with that sort of complacency, which the dwellers in the colonies were apt to betray, whenever an allusion was made to the acknowledged importance of their connections in that country, toward which they all looked as to the fountain of honor; and then, as quickly as if the change in her ideas was but a natural transition in the subject, she observed—

"Surely Cecil cannot know of the arrival of our kinsman! she is not apt to be so remiss in paying attention to our guests!"

"She does me the more honor, that she considers me a relative, and one who requires no formality in his reception."

"You are but cousins twice removed," returned the old lady, a little gravely; "and there is surely no affinity in that degree which can justify any forgetfulness of the usual courtesies. You see, cousin Lionel, how much we value the consanguinity, when it is a subject of pride to the most remote branches of the family!"

"I am but little of a genealogist, madam; though, if I

retain a true impression of what I have heard, Miss Dynevor is of too good blood, in the direct line, to value the collateral drops of an intermarriage."

"Pardon me, Major Lincoln; her father, Colonel Dynevor, was certainly an Englishman of an ancient and honorable name, but no family in the realm need scorn an alliance with our own. I say our own, cousin Lionel, for I would never have you forget that I am a Lincoln, and was the sister of your grandfather."

A little surprised at the seeming contradiction in the language of the good lady, the young man bowed his head to the compliment, and cast his eyes at his younger companion with a sort of longing to change the discourse, by addressing the reserved young woman nigh him, that was very excusable in one of his sex and years. He had not time, however, to make more than one or two commonplace remarks, and receive their answers, before Mrs. Lechmere said, with some exhibition of staid displeasure against her grandchild—

"Go, Agnes, and acquaint your cousin of this happy event. She has been sensibly alive to your safety, during the whole time consumed by your voyage. We have had the prayers of the Church, for a 'person gone to sea,' read each Sunday, since the receipt of your letters announcing your intention to embark; and I have been exceedingly pleased to observe the deep interest with which Cecil joined in our petitions."

Lionel mumbled a few words of thanks, and leaning back in his chair, threw his eyes upward, but whether in pious gratitude or not, we conceive it is not our province to determine. During the delivery of Mrs. Lechmere's last speech, and the expressive pantomime that succeeded it, Agnes Danforth rose and left the room. The door had been some little time closed before the silence was again broken; during which Mrs. Lechmere evidently essayed in vain, once or twice, to speak. Her color, pale and immovable as usually seemed her withered look, changed in its shades, and her lip trembled involuntarily. She, however, soon found her utterance, though the first tones of her voice were choked and husky.

"I may have appeared remiss, cousin Lionel," she said, "but there are subjects that can be discussed with propriety only between the nearest relatives. Sir Lionel—you left him in as good a state of bodily health, I hope, as his mental illness will allow?"

"It is so represented to me."

"You have seen him lately?"

"Not in fifteen years; my presence was said to increase his disorder, and the physicians forbade any more interviews. He continues at the private establishment near town, and, as the lucid intervals are thought to increase, both in frequency and duration, I often indulge in the pleasing hope of being restored again to my father. The belief is justified by his years, which, you know, are yet under fifty."

A long, and apparently a painful silence, succeeded this interesting communication; at length the lady said, with a tremor in her voice, for which the young man almost revered her, as it so plainly bespoke her interest in her nephew, as well as the goodness of her heart—

"I will thank you for a glass of that water in the buffet. Pardon me, cousin Lionel, but this melancholy subject always overcomes me. I will retire a few moments, with your indulgence, and hasten the appearance of my grandchild. I pine that you may meet."

Her absence, just at that moment, was too agreeable to the feelings of Lionel, for him to gainsay her intention; though, instead of following Agnes Danforth, who had preceded her on the same duty, the tottering steps of Mrs. Lechmere conducted her to a door, which communicated with her own apartment. For several minutes the young man trampled on the "saliant lions" of Lechmere, with a rapidity that seemed to emulate their own mimic speed, as he paced to and fro across the narrow apartment, his eye glancing vacantly along the labored wainscots, embracing the argent, azure and purple fields of the different escutcheons, as heedlessly as if they were not charged with the distinguishing symbols of so many honorable names. This mental abstraction was, however, shortly dissipated by the sudden appearance of one, who had glided into the room, and advanced to its centre, before he became conscious of her presence. A light, rounded, and exquisitely proportioned female form, accompanied by a youthful and expressive countenance, with an air in which womanly grace blended so nicely with feminine delicacy as to cause each motion and gesture to command respect, at the same time that it was singularly insinuating, was an object to suspend, even at a first glance, provided that glance were by surprise, the steps of a more absent and less courteous youth than the one we have attempted to describe. Major

Lincoln knew that this young lady could be no other than Cecil Dynevor, the daughter of a British officer, long since deceased, by the only child of Mrs. Lechmere, who was also in her grave ; and, consequently, that she was one to whom he was so well known by character, and so nearly allied by blood, as to render it an easy task for a man accustomed to the world, as he had been, to remove any little embarrassments, which might have beset a less practised youth, by acting as his own usher. This he certainly attempted, and at first with a freedom which his affinity, and the circumstances, would seem to allow, though it was chastened by easy politeness. But the restraint visible in the manner of the lady was so marked, that, by the time his salutations were ended, and he had handed her to a seat, the young man felt as much embarrassment as if he had found himself alone, for the first time, with the woman whom he had been pining, for months, to favor with a very particular communication. Whether it is that nature has provided the other sex with a tact for these occasions, or that the young lady became sensible that her deportment was not altogether such as was worthy either of herself, or the guest of her grandmother, she was certainly the first to relieve the slight awkwardness that was but too apparent in the commencement of the interview.

"My grandmother has long been expecting this pleasure, Major Lincoln," she said, "and your arrival has been at a most auspicious moment. The state of the country grows each day so very alarming, that I have indeed long urged her to visit our relatives in England, until the disputes shall have terminated."

The tones of an extremely soft and melodious voice, and a pronunciation quite as exact as if the speaker had acquired the sounds in the English court, and which was entirely free from the slight vernacular peculiarity, which had offended his ear, in the few words that fell from Agnes Danforth, certainly aided a native attraction of manner, which it seemed impossible for the young lady to cast entirely aside.

"You, who are so much of an English woman, would find great pleasure in the exchange," he answered, "and if half what I have heard from a fellow passenger, of the state of the country, be true, I shall be foremost in seconding your request. Both Ravenscliffe and the house in Soho would be greatly at the service of Mrs. Lechmere."

"It was my wish that she would accept the pressing in-

vitations of my father's relative, Lord Cardonnel, who has long urged me to pass a few years in his own family. A separation would be painful to us both, but should my grandmother, in such an event, determine to take her residence in the dwellings of her ancestors, I could not be censured for adopting a resolution to abide under the roofs of mine."

The piercing eye of Major Lincoln fell full upon her own, as she delivered this intention, and as it dropped on the floor, the slight smile that played round his lip, was produced by the passing thought, that the provincial beauty had inherited so much of her grandmother's pride of genealogy, as to be willing to impress on his mind, that the niece of a viscount was superior to the heir of a baronetcy. But the quick, burning flush, that instantly passed across the features of Cecil Dynevor, might have taught him, that she was acting under the impulse of much deeper feelings than such an unworthy purpose would indicate. The effect, however, was such as to make the young man glad to see Mrs. Lechmere re-enter the room, leaning on the arm of her niece.

"I perceive, my cousin Lionel," said the lady, as she moved with a feeble step toward the settee, "that you and Cecil have found each other out, without the necessity of any other introduction than the affinity between you. I surely do not mean the affinity of blood altogether, you know, for that cannot be said to amount to anything; but I believe there exist certain features of the mind that are transmitted through families quite as distinctly as any which belong to the countenance."

"Could I flatter myself with possessing the slightest resemblance to Miss Dynevor, in either of those particulars, I should be doubly proud of the connection," returned Lionel, while he assisted the good lady to a seat, with a coolness that sufficiently denoted how little he cared about the matter.

"But I am not disposed to have my right to claim near kindred with cousin Lionel at all disputed," cried the young lady, with sudden animation. "It has pleased our forefathers to order such——"

"Nay, nay, my child," interrupted her grandmother, "you forget that the term of cousin can only be used in cases of near consanguinity, and where familiar situations will excuse it. But Major Lincoln knows, that we in the colonies are apt to make the most of the language, and

count our cousins almost as far as if we were members of the Scottish clans. Speaking of the clans reminds me of the rebellion of '45. It is not thought in England, that our infatuated colonists will ever be so foolhardy as to assume their arms in earnest."

"There are various opinions on that subject," said Lionel. "Most military men scout the idea; though I find, occasionally, an officer, that has served on this continent, who thinks not only that the appeal will be made, but that the struggle will be bloody."

"Why should they not!" said Agnes Danforth, abruptly; "they are men, and the English are no more!"

Lionel turned his looks, in a little surprise, on the speaker, to whose countenance an almost imperceptible cast in one eye imparted a look of arch good-nature, that her manner would seem to contradict, and smiled as he repeated her words—

"Why should they not, indeed! I know no other reasons than that it would be both a mad and an unlawful act. I can assure you that I am not one of those who affect to undervalue my own countrymen; for you will remember that I too am an American."

"I have heard it said that such of our volunteers as wear uniforms at all," said Agnes, "appear in blue, and not in scarlet."

"'Tis his Majesty's pleasure that his 47th foot should wear this gaudy color," returned the young man, laughing; "though, for myself, I am quite willing to resign it to the use of you ladies, and to adopt another, could it well be."

"It might be done, sir."

"In what manner?"

"By resigning your commission with it."

Mrs. Lechmere had evidently permitted her niece to proceed thus far, without interruption, to serve some purpose of her own; but perceiving that her guest by no means exhibited the air of pique, which the British officers were so often weak enough to betray, when the women took into their hands the defence of their country's honor, she rang the bell, as she observed—

"Bold language, Major Lincoln! bold language for a young lady under twenty. But Miss Danforth is privileged to speak her mind freely, for some of her father's family are but too deeply implicated in the unlawful proceedings of these evil times. We have kept Cecil, however, more to her allegiance."

"And yet even Cecil has been known to refuse the favor of her countenance to the entertainments given by the British officers!" said Agnes, a little piquantly.

"And would you have Cecil Dynevor frequent balls and entertainments unaccompanied by a proper chaperon," returned Mrs. Lechmere; "or is it expected that, at seventy, I can venture in public to maintain the credit of our family? But we keep Major Lincoln from his refreshments with our idle disputes. Cato, we wait your movements."

Mrs. Lechmere delivered her concluding intimation to the black in attendance, with an air that partook somewhat of mystery. The old domestic, who, probably from long practice, understood, more by the expression of her eye than by any words she had uttered, the wishes of his mistress, proceeded to close the outer shutters of the windows, and to draw the curtains with the most exact care. When this duty was performed, he raised a small oval table from its regular position among the flowing folds of the drapery that shrouded the deep apertures for light, and placed it in front of Miss Dynevor. A salver of massive silver, containing an equipage of the finest Dresden followed, and in a few minutes a hissing urn of the same precious metal garnished the polished surface of the mahogany. During these arrangements, Mrs. Lechmere and her guest maintained a general discourse, touching chiefly on the welfare and condition of certain individuals of their alliance, in England. Notwithstanding the demand thus made on his attention, Lionel was able to discover a certain appearance of mystery and caution in each movement of the black, as he proceeded leisurely in his duty. Miss Dynevor permitted the disposition of the tea-table to be made before her, passively, and her cousin, Agnes Danforth, threw herself back on one of the settees, with a look that indicated cool displeasure. When the usual compound was made in two little fluted cups, over whose pure white a few red and green sprigs were sparingly scattered, the black presented one containing the grateful beverage to his mistress, and the other to the stranger.

"Pardon me, Miss Danforth," said Lionel, recollecting himself after he had accepted the offering; "I have suffered my sea-breeding to obtain the advantage."

"Enjoy your error, sir, if you can find any gratification in the indulgence," returned the young lady.

"But I should enjoy it the more, could I see you participating in the luxury."

"You have termed the idle indulgence well ; 'tis nothing but a luxury, and such a one as can be easily dispensed with ; I thank you, sir, I do not drink tea."

"Surely no lady can forswear her bohea ! be persuaded."

"I know not how the subtle poison may operate on your English ladies, Major Lincoln, but it is no difficult matter for an American girl to decline the use of a detestable herb, which is one, among many others, of the causes that is likely to involve her country and kindred in danger and strife."

The young man, who had really intended no more than the common civilities due from his sex to the other, bowed in silence, though, as he turned from her, he could not forbear looking toward the table to see whether the principles of the other young American were quite as rigid. Cecil sat bending over the salver, playing idly with a curiously wrought spoon, made to represent a sprig of the plant, whose fragrance had been thus put in requisition to contribute to his indulgence, while the steam from the china vessel before her was wreathing in a faint mist around her polished brow.

"You at least, Miss Dynevor," said Lionel, "appear to have no dislike to the herb, you breathe its vapor so freely."

Cecil cast a glance at him, which changed the demure and somewhat proud composure of her countenance into a look of sudden, joyous humor, that was infinitely more natural, as she answered laughingly—

"I own a woman's weakness.—I must believe it was tea that tempted our common mother in Paradise !"

"It would show that the cunning of the serpent has been transmitted to a later day, could that be proved," said Agnes, "though the instrument of temptation has lost some of its virtue."

"How know you that ?" said Lionel, anxious to pursue the trifling, in order to remove the evident distance which had existed between them ; "had Eve shut her ears as rigidly as you close your mouth against the offering, we might yet have enjoyed the first gift to our parents."

"Oh, sir, 'tis no such stranger to me as you may imagine from the indifference I have assumed on the present occasion ; as Job Pray says, Boston harbor is nothing but a 'big teapot !'"

"You know Job Pray, then, Miss Danforth !" said Lionel, not a little amused by her spirit.

"Certainly ; Boston is so small, and Job so useful, that everybody knows the simpleton."

"He belongs to a distinguished family, then, for I have his own assurance that everybody knows his perturbed mother, Abigail."

"You!" exclaimed Cecil, again, in that sweet, natural voice that had before startled her auditor; "what can you know of poor Job, and his almost equally unfortunate mother!"

"Now, young ladies, I have you in my snares!" cried Lionel; "you may possibly resist the steams of tea, but what woman can withstand the impulse of her curiosity! Not to be too cruel with my fair kinswomen on so short an acquaintance, however, I will go so far as to acknowledge that I have already had an interview with Mrs. Pray."

The reply which Agnes was about to deliver was interrupted by a slight crash, and on turning they beheld the fragments of a piece of the splendid set of Dresden, lying at the feet of Mrs. Lechmere.

"My dear grand-mamma is ill!" cried Cecil, springing to the assistance of the old lady. "Hasten, Cato—Major Lincoln, you are more active—for heaven's sake a glass of water—Agnes, your salts."

The amiable anxiety of her grandchild was not, however, so necessary as first appearances would have indicated, and Mrs. Lechmere gently put aside the salts, though she did not decline the glass which Lionel offered for the second time in so short a period.

"I fear you will mistake me for a sad invalid, cousin Lionel," said the old lady, when she had become a little composed; "but I believe it is this very tea, of which so much has been said, and which I drink to excess, from pure loyalty, that unsettles my nerves—I must refrain, like the girls, though from a very different motive. We are a people of early hours, Major Lincoln, but you are at home here, and will pursue your pleasure; I must, however, claim an indulgence for threescore-and-ten, and be permitted to wish you a good rest after your voyage. Cato has his orders to contribute all he can to your comfort."

Leaning on her two assistants, the old lady withdrew, leaving Lionel to the full possession of the apartment. As the hour was getting late, and from the compliments they had exchanged, he did not expect the return of the younger ladies, he called for a candle, and was shown to his own room. As soon as the few indispensables, which rendered a valet necessary to a gentleman of that period, were observed, he dismissed Meriton, and throwing himself in the bed, courted the sweets of the pillow.

"You have termed the idle indulgence well; 'tis nothing but a luxury, and such a one as can be easily dispensed with; I thank you, sir, I do not drink tea."

"Surely no lady can forswear her bohea! be persuaded."

"I know not how the subtle poison may operate on your English ladies, Major Lincoln, but it is no difficult matter for an American girl to decline the use of a detestable herb, which is one, among many others, of the causes that is likely to involve her country and kindred in danger and strife."

The young man, who had really intended no more than the common civilities due from his sex to the other, bowed in silence, though, as he turned from her, he could not forbear looking toward the table to see whether the principles of the other young American were quite as rigid. Cecil sat bending over the salver, playing idly with a curiously wrought spoon, made to represent a sprig of the plant, whose fragrance had been thus put in requisition to contribute to his indulgence, while the steam from the china vessel before her was wreathing in a faint mist around her polished brow.

"You at least, Miss Dynevor," said Lionel, "appear to have no dislike to the herb, you breathe its vapor so freely."

Cecil cast a glance at him, which changed the demure and somewhat proud composure of her countenance into a look of sudden, joyous humor, that was infinitely more natural, as she answered laughingly—

"I own a woman's weakness.—I must believe it was tea that tempted our common mother in Paradise!"

"It would show that the cunning of the serpent has been transmitted to a later day, could that be proved," said Agnes, "though the instrument of temptation has lost some of its virtue."

"How know you that?" said Lionel, anxious to pursue the trifling, in order to remove the evident distance which had existed between them; "had Eve shut her ears as rigidly as you close your mouth against the offering, we might yet have enjoyed the first gift to our parents."

"Oh, sir, 'tis no such stranger to me as you may imagine from the indifference I have assumed on the present occasion; as Job Pray says, Boston harbor is nothing but a 'big teapot!'"

"You know Job Pray, then, Miss Danforth!" said Lionel, not a little amused by her spirit.

"Certainly; Boston is so small, and Job so useful, that everybody knows the simpleton."

"He belongs to a distinguished family, then, for I have his own assurance that everybody knows his perturbed mother, Abigail."

"You!" exclaimed Cecil, again, in that sweet, natural voice that had before startled her auditor; "what can you know of poor Job, and his almost equally unfortunate mother!"

"Now, young ladies, I have you in my snares!" cried Lionel; "you may possibly resist the steams of tea, but what woman can withstand the impulse of her curiosity! Not to be too cruel with my fair kinswomen on so short an acquaintance, however, I will go so far as to acknowledge that I have already had an interview with Mrs. Pray."

The reply which Agnes was about to deliver was interrupted by a slight crash, and on turning they beheld the fragments of a piece of the splendid set of Dresden, lying at the feet of Mrs. Lechmere.

"My dear grand-mamma is ill!" cried Cecil, springing to the assistance of the old lady. "Hasten, Cato—Major Lincoln, you are more active—for heaven's sake a glass of water—Agnes, your salts."

The amiable anxiety of her grandchild was not, however, so necessary as first appearances would have indicated, and Mrs. Lechmere gently put aside the salts, though she did not decline the glass which Lionel offered for the second time in so short a period.

"I fear you will mistake me for a sad invalid, cousin Lionel," said the old lady, when she had become a little composed; "but I believe it is this very tea, of which so much has been said, and which I drink to excess, from pure loyalty, that unsettles my nerves—I must refrain, like the girls, though from a very different motive. We are a people of early hours, Major Lincoln, but you are at home here, and will pursue your pleasure; I must, however, claim an indulgence for threescore-and-ten, and be permitted to wish you a good rest after your voyage. Cato has his orders to contribute all he can to your comfort."

Leaning on her two assistants, the old lady withdrew, leaving Lionel to the full possession of the apartment. As the hour was getting late, and from the compliments they had exchanged, he did not expect the return of the younger ladies, he called for a candle, and was shown to his own room. As soon as the few indispensables, which rendered a valet necessary to a gentleman of that period, were observed, he dismissed Meriton, and throwing himself in the bed, courted the sweets of the pillow.

Many incidents, however, had occurred during the day, that induced a train of thoughts, which for a long time prevented his attaining the natural rest he sought. After indulging in long and uneasy reflections on certain events, too closely connected with his personal feelings to be lightly remembered, the young man began to muse on his reception, and on the individuals who had been, as it were, for the first time, introduced to him.

It was quite apparent, that both Mrs. Lechmere and her granddaughter were acting their several parts, though whether in concert or not, remained to be discovered. But in Agnes Danforth, with all his subtlety, he could perceive nothing but the plain and direct, though a little blunt, peculiarities of her nature and education. Like most very young men, who had just been made acquainted with two youthful females, both of them much superior to the generality of their sex in personal charms, he fell asleep musing on their characters. Nor, considering the circumstances, will it be at all surprising, when we add that, before morning, he was dreaming of the Avon, of Bristol, on board which stout vessel he even thought that he was discussing a chowder on the Banks of Newfoundland, which had been unaccountably prepared by the fair hands of Miss Danforth, and which was strangely flavored with tea; while the Hebe-looking countenance of Cecil Dynevor was laughing at his perplexities with undisguised good-humor, and with all the vivacity of girlish merriment.

CHAPTER IV.

"A good portly man, i' faith, and a corpulent."

—*King Henry IV.*

THE sun was just stirring the heavy bank of fog, which had rested on the waters during the night, as Lionel toiled his way up the side of Beacon-Hill, anxious to catch a glimpse of his native scenery while it was yet glowing with the first touch of day. The islands raised their green heads above the mist, and the wide amphitheatre of hills that encircled the bay was still visible, though the vapor was creeping in places along the valleys—now concealing the entrance to some beautiful glen, and now wreathing itself fantastically around a tall spire that told the site of a suburban village. Though the people of the town were awake and up, yet the sacred character of the day, and the

state of the times, contributed to suppress those sounds which usually distinguish populous places. The cool nights and warm days of April had generated a fog more than usually dense, which was deserting its watery bed, and stealing insidiously along the land, to unite with the vapors of the rivers and brooks, spreading a wider curtain before the placid view. As Lionel stood on the brow of the platform that crowned the eminence, the glimpses of houses and hills, of towers and ships, of places known and places forgotten, passed before his vision, through the openings in the mist, like phantoms of the imagination. The whole scene, animated and in motion, as it seemed by its changes, appeared to his excited feelings like a fanciful panorama, exhibited for his eye alone, when his enjoyment was interrupted by a voice apparently at no great distance. It was a man singing to a common English air fragments of some ballad, with a peculiarly vile nasal cadency. Through the frequent pauses, he was enabled to comprehend a few words, which, by their recurrence, were evidently intended for a chorus to the rest of the production. The reader will understand the character of the whole from these lines, which ran as follows :

And they that would be free,
 Out they go ;
While the slaves, as you may see,
Stay, to drink their p'ison tea,
 Down below !

Lionel, after listening to this expressive ditty for a moment, followed the direction of the sounds until he encountered Job Pray, who was seated on one of the flights of steps, which aided the ascent to the platform, cracking a few walnuts on the boards, while he employed those intervals, when his mouth could find no better employment, in uttering the above-mentioned strains.

"How now, Master Pray ; do you come here to sing your orisons to the goddess of liberty on a Sunday morning," cried Lionel ; "or are you the town lark, and for want of wings, take to this height to obtain an altitude for your melody ?"

"There's no harm in singing psalm tunes or continental songs any day in the week," said the lad, without raising his eyes from his occupation. "Job don't know what a lark is, but if it belongs to the town, the soldiers are so thick, they can't keep it on the common."

"And what objection can you have to the soldiers possessing a corner of your common?"

"They starve the cows, and then they won't give milk; grass is sweet to beasts in the spring of the year."

"But, my life for it, the soldiers don't eat the grass; your brindles and your blacks, your reds and your whites, may have the first offering of the spring as usual."

"But Boston cows don't love grass that British soldiers have trampled on," said the sullen lad.

"This is, indeed, carrying notions of liberty to refinement!" exclaimed Lionel, laughing.

Job shook his head threateningly, as he looked up and said, "Don't you let Ralph hear you say anything ag'in liberty!"

"Ralph! who is he, lad? your genius! where do you keep the invisible, that there is danger of his overhearing what I say?"

"He's up there in the fog," said Job, pointing significantly toward the foot of the beacon, which a dense volume of vapor was enwrapping, probably attracted up the tall post that supported the grate.

Lionel gazed at the smoky column for a moment, when the mists began to dissolve, and amid their evolutions he beheld the dim figure of his aged fellow passenger. The old man was still clad in his simple, tarnished vestments of gray, which harmonized so singularly with the mists as to impart a look almost ethereal to his wasted form. As the medium through which he was seen became less cloudy, his features grew visible, and Lionel could distinguish the uneasy, rapid glances of his eyes, which seemed to roam over the distant objects with an earnestness that appeared to mock the misty veil that was floating before so much of the view. While Lionel stood fixed to the spot, gazing at this irregular being with that secret awe which the other had succeeded in inspiring, the old man waved his hand impatiently, as if he would cast aside his shroud. At that instant a bright sunbeam darted into the vapor, illuminating his person, and melting the mist into thin air. The anxious, haggard, and severe expression of his countenance changed at the touch of the ray, and he smiled with a softness and attraction that thrilled the nerves of the other, as he called aloud to the sensitive young soldier—

"Come hither, Lionel Lincoln, to the foot of this beacon, where you may gather warnings, which, if properly heeded, will guide you through many and great dangers unharmed."

"I am glad you have spoken," said Lionel, advancing to his side; "you appeared like a being of another world, wrapped in that mantle of fog, and I felt tempted to kneel, and ask a benediction."

"And am I not a being of another world! most of my interests are already in the grave, and I tarry here only for a space, because there is a great work to be done, which cannot be performed without me. My view of the world of spirits, young man, is much clearer and more distinct than yours of this variable scene at your feet. There is no mist to obstruct the eye, nor any doubts as to the colors it presents."

"You are happy, sir, in the extremity of your age, to be so assured. But I fear your sudden determination last night subjected you to inconvenience in the tenement of this changeling."

"The boy is a good boy," said the old man, stroking the head of the natural complacently; "we understand each other, Major Lincoln, and that shortens introductions, and renders communion easy."

"That you feel alike on one subject, I have already discovered; but there I should think the resemblance and the intelligence must end."

"The propensities of the mind in its infancy and in its maturity, are but a span apart," said the stranger; "the amount of human knowledge is but to know how much we are under the dominion of our passions; and he who has learned by experience how to smother the volcano, and he who never felt its fires, are surely fit associates."

Lionel bowed in silence to an opinion so humbling to the other, and, after a pause of a moment, adverted to their situation.

"The sun begins to make himself felt, and when he has driven away these ragged remnants of the fog, we shall see those places each of us have frequented in his day."

"Shall we find them as we left them, think you? or will you see the stranger in possession of the haunts of your infancy?"

"Not the stranger, certainly, for we are the subjects of one king; children who own a common parent."

"I will not reply that he has proved himself an unnatural father," said the old man, calmly; "the gentleman who now fills the British throne is less to be censured than his advisers, for the oppression of his reign——"

"Sir," interrupted Lionel, "if such allusions are made to

the person of my sovereign, we must separate ; for it ill becomes a British officer to hear his master mentioned with levity."

"Levity!" repeated the other slowly. "It is a fault indeed to accompany gray locks and wasted limbs! but your jealous watchfulness betrays you into error. I have breathed in the atmosphere of kings, young man, and know how to separate the individual and his purpose from the policy of his government. 'Tis the latter that will sever this great empire, and deprive the third George of what has so often and so well been termed 'the brightest jewel in his crown.'"

"I must leave you, sir," said Lionel ; "the opinions you so freely expressed during our passage, were on principles which I can hardly call opposed to our own constitution, and might be heard, not only without offence, but frequently with admiration ; but this language approaches to treason!"

"Go, then," returned the unmoved stranger ; "descend to yon degraded common, and bid your mercenaries seize me—'twill be only the blood of an old man, but 'twill help to fatten the land ; or send your merciless grenadiers to torment their victim before the axe shall do its work ; a man who has lived so long, can surely spare a little of his time to the tormentors!"

"I could have thought, sir, that you might spare such a reproach to me," said Lionel.

"I do spare it, and I do more ; I forget my years, and solicit forgiveness. But had you known slavery, as I have done, in its worst of forms, you would know how to prize the inestimable blessing of freedom."

"Have you ever known slavery, in your travels, more closely than in what you deem the violations of principle?"

"Have I not?" said the stranger, smiling bitterly ; "I have known it as man should never know it ; in act and will. I have lived days, months, and even years, to hear others coldly declare my wants ; to see others dole out their meagre pittances to my necessities, and to hear others assume the right, to express the sufferings, and to control the enjoyments of sensibilities that God had given to me only!"

"To endure such thralldom, you must have fallen into the power of the infidel barbarians!"

"Ay! boy, I thank you for the words ; they were indeed most worthy of the epithets! infidels that denied the precepts of our blessed Redeemer ; and barbarians that treated

one having a soul, and possessing reason like themselves, as a beast of the field."

"Why didn't you come to Boston, Ralph, and tell that to the people in Funnel-Hall?" exclaimed Job; "ther'd ha' been a stir about it!"

"Child, I did come to Boston, again and again, in thought; and the appeals that I made to my townsmen would have moved the very roof of old Faneuil, could they have been uttered within her walls. But 'twas in vain! they had the power, and like demons—or rather like miserable men—they abused it."

Lionel, sensibly touched, was about to reply in a suitable manner, when he heard a voice calling his own name aloud, as if the speaker were ascending the opposite acclivity of the hill. The instant the sounds reached his ears, the old man rose from his seat, on the foundation of the beacon, and gliding over the brow of the platform, followed by Job, they descended into a volume of mist that was still clinging to the side of the hill, with amazing swiftness.

"Why, Leo! thou lion in name, and deer in activity!" exclaimed the intruder, as he surmounted the steep ascent, "what can have brought you up into the clouds so early! whew—a man needs a New-Market training to scale such a precipice. But, Leo, my dear fellow, I rejoice to see you—we knew you were expected in the first ship, and as I was coming from morning parade, I met a couple of grooms in the 'Lincoln green,' you know, leading each a blooded charger—faith, one of them would have been quite convenient to climb this accursed hill on—whew and whew-w, again—well, I knew the liveries at a glance; as to the horses, I hope to be better acquainted with them hereafter. 'Pray, sir,' said I, to one of the liveried scoundrels, 'whom do you serve?' 'Major Lincoln, of Ravenscliffe, sir,' said he, with a look as impudent as if he could have said, like you and I, 'His sacred majesty, the king.' That's the answer of the servants of your ten thousand a year men! Now, if my fool had been asked such a question, his answer would have been, craven dog as he is, 'Captain Polwarth, of the 47th;' leaving the inquirer, though it should even be some curious maiden who had taken a fancy to the *tout ensemble* of my outline, in utter ignorance that there is such a place in the world as Polwarth-Hall!"

During this voluble speech, which was interrupted by sundry efforts to regain the breath lost in the ascent, Lionel shook his friend cordially by the hand, and at-

tempted to express his own pleasure at the meeting. The failure of wind, however, which was a sort of besetting sin with Captain Polwarth, had now compelled him to pause, and gave time to Lionel to reply.

"This hill is the last place where I should have expected to meet you," he said. "I took it for granted you would not be stirring until nine or ten at least, when it was my intention to inquire you out, and to give you a call before I paid my respects to the commander-in-chief."

"Ah! you may thank his excellency, the 'Hon. Thomas Gage, governor and commander-in-chief in and over the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and vice-admiral of the same,' as he styles himself in his proclamations, for this especial favor; though, between ourselves, Leo, he is about as much governor *over* the Province as he is owner of those hunters you have just landed."

"But why am I to thank him for this interview?"

"Why! look about you, and tell me what you behold—nothing but fog—nay, I see *there* is a steeple, and *yonder* is the smoking sea, and *here* are the chimneys of Hancock's house beneath us, smoking too, as if their rebellious master were at home, and preparing his feed! but everything in sight is essentially smoky, and there is a natural aversion, in us epicures, to smoke. Nature dictates that a man who has as much to do in a day, in carrying himself about, as your humble servant, should not cut his rest too abruptly in the morning. But the honorable Thomas, governor and vice-admiral, etc., has ordered us under arms with the sun, officers as well as men!"

"Surely that is no great hardship to a soldier," returned Lionel; "and moreover, it seems to agree with you marvellously! Now I look again, Polwarth, I am amazed! Surely you are not in a light-infantry jacket!"

"Certes—what is there in that so wonderful?" returned the other, with great gravity. "Don't I become the dress, or is it the dress which does not adorn me, that you look ready to die with mirth? Laugh it out, Leo. I am used to it these three days—but what is there, after all, so remarkable in Peter Polwarth's commanding a company of light infantry? Am I not just five feet, six and one-eighth of an inch?—the precise height!"

"You appear to have been so accurate in your longitudinal admeasurement, that you must carry one of Harrison's timepieces in your pocket; did it ever suggest itself to you to use the quadrant also?"

"For my latitude! I understand you, Leo; because I am shaped a little like mother earth, does it argue that I cannot command a light-infantry company?"

"Ay, even as Joshua commanded the sun. But the stopping of the planet itself, is not a greater miracle in my eyes, than to see you in that attire."

"Well, then, the mystery shall be explained; but first let us be seated on this beacon," said Captain Polwarth, establishing himself with great method in the place so lately occupied by the attenuated form of the stranger; "a true soldier husbands his resources for a time of need; that word, husbands, brings me at once to the point—I am in love."

"That is surprising!"

"But what is much more so, I would fain be married."

"It must be a woman of no mean endowments that could excite such desires in Captain Polwarth, of the 47th, and of Polwarth-Hall!"

"She is a woman of great qualifications, Major Lincoln," said the lover, with a sudden gravity that indicated his gayety of manner was not entirely natural. "In figure she may be said to be done to a turn. When she is grave, she walks with the stateliness of a show beef; when she runs, 'tis with the activity of a turkey; and when at rest, I can only compare her to a dish of venison, savory, delicate, and what one can never get enough of."

"You have, to adopt your own metaphors, given such a 'rare' sketch of her person, I am 'burning' to hear something of her mental qualifications."

"My metaphors are not poetical, perhaps, but they are the first that offer themselves to my mind, and they are natural. Her accomplishments exceed her native gifts greatly. In the first place, she is witty; in the second, she is as impertinent as the devil; and in the third, as inveterate a little traitor to King George as there is in all Boston."

"These are strange recommendations to your favor!"

"The most infallible of all recommendations. They are piquant, like savory sauces, which excite the appetite, and season the dish. Now her treason (for it amounts to that in fact) is like olives, and gives a gusto to the generous port of my loyalty. Her impertinence is oil to the cold salad of my modesty, and her acid wit mingles with the sweetness of my temperament, in that sort of pleasant combination, with which sweet and sour blend in sherbet."

"It would be idle for me to gainsay the charms of such

a woman," returned Lionel, a good deal amused with the droll mixture of seriousness and humor in the other's manner; "now for her connection with the light-infantry—she is not of the light corps of her own sex, Polwarth?"

"Pardon me, Major Lincoln; I cannot joke on this subject. Miss Danforth is of one of the best families in Boston."

"Danforth! not Agnes, surely!"

"The very same!" exclaimed Polwarth, in surprise; "what do you know of her?"

"Only that she is a sort of cousin of my own, and that we are inmates of the same house. We bear equal affinity to Mrs. Lechmere, and the good lady has insisted that I shall make my home in Tremont Street."

"I rejoice to hear it! At all events, our intimacy may now be improved to some better purpose than eating and drinking. But to the point—there were certain damnable innuendoes getting into circulation, concerning my proportions, which I considered it prudent to look down at once."

"In order to do which, you had only to look thinner."

"And do I not, in this appropriate dress? To be perfectly serious with you, Leo,—for to you I can freely unburden myself,—you know what a set we are in the 47th: let them once fasten an opprobrious term, or a nickname, on you, and you take it to the grave, be it ever so burdensome."

"There is a way, certainly, to check ungentleman-like liberties," said Lionel, gravely.

"Poh! poh! a man wouldn't wish to fight about a pound more or a pound less of fat! still the name is a great deal, and first impressions are everything. Now, whoever thinks of Grand Cairo, as a village; of the Grand Turk and Great Mogul, as little boys; or, who would believe, by hearsay, that Captain Polwarth, of the light infantry, could weigh one hundred and eighty!"

"Add twenty to it."

"Not a pound more, as I am a sinner. I was weighed in the presence of the whole mess no later than last week, since when I have rather lost than gained an ounce, for this early rising is no friend to a thriving condition. 'Twas in my nightgown, you'll remember, Leo, for we, who tally so often, can't afford to throw in boots, and buckles, and all those sorts of things, like your feather-weights."

"But I marvel how Nesbitt was induced to consent to the appointment," said Lionel; "he loves a little display."

"I am your man for that," interrupted the captain; "we are embodied you know, and I make more display, if that be what you require, than any captain in the corps. But I will whisper a secret in your ear. There has been a nasty business here, lately, in which the 47th has gained no new laurels—a matter of tarring and feathering, about an old rusty musket."

"I have heard something of the affair already," returned Lionel, "and was grieved to find the men justifying some of their own brutal conduct last night, by the example of their commander."

"Mum—'tis a delicate matter—well, that tar has brought the colonel into particularly bad odor in Boston, especially among the women, in whose good graces we are all of us lower than I have ever known scarlet coats to stand before. Why, Leo, the Mohairs are altogether the better men, here! But there is not an officer in the whole army who has made more friends in the place than your humble servant. I have availed myself of my popularity, which just now is no trifling thing, and partly by promises, and partly by secret interest, I have the company; to which, you know, my rank in the regiment gives me an undoubted title."

"A perfectly satisfactory explanation; a most commendable ambition on your part, and a certain symptom that the peace is not to be disturbed; for Gage would never permit such an arrangement, had he any active operations in his eye."

"Why, there I think you are more than half right; these Yankees have been talking, and resolving, and approbating their resolves, as they call it, these ten years past; and what does it all amount to? To be sure, things grow worse and worse every day—but Jonathan is an enigma to me. Now you know, when we were in the cavalry together—God forgive me the suicide I committed in exchanging into the foot, which I never should have done, could I have found in all England such a thing as an easy goer, or a safe leaper—but then, if the commons took offence at a new tax, or a stagnation in business, why, they got together in mobs, and burnt a house or two, frightened a magistrate, and perhaps hustled a constable; then in we came at a hand gallop, you know, flourished our swords,

and scattered the ragged devils to the four winds ; when the courts did the rest, leaving us a cheap victory at the expense of a little wind, which was amply compensated by an increased appetite for dinner. But here it is altogether a different sort of thing."

"And what are the most alarming symptoms, just now, in the colonies?" asked Major Lincoln, with a sensible interest in the subject.

"They refuse their natural aliment to uphold what they call their principles ; the women abjure tea, and the men abandon their fisheries ! There has been hardly such a thing as even a wild-duck brought into the market this spring, in consequence of the Port-Bill, and yet they grow more stubborn every day. If it should come to blows, however, thank God we are strong enough to open a passage for ourselves to any part of the continent where provisions may be plentier ; and I hear more troops are already on the way."

"If it should come to blows, which heaven forbid," said Major Lincoln, "we shall be besieged where we now are."

"Besieged !" exclaimed Polwarth, in evident alarm ; "if I thought there was the least prospect of such a calamity, I would sell out to-morrow. It is bad enough now ; our mess-table is never decently covered, but if there should come a siege, 'twould be absolute starvation.—No, no, Leo, their minute men, and their long-tailed rabble, would hardly think of besieging four thousand British soldiers with a fleet to back them. Four thousand ! if the regiments I hear named are actually on the way, there will be eight thousand of us—as good men as ever wore——"

"Light-infantry jackets," interrupted Lionel. "But the regiments are certainly coming ; Clinton, Burgoyne, and Howe, had an audience to take leave on the same day with myself. The service is exceedingly popular with the king, and our reception, of course, was most gracious ; though I thought the eye of royalty looked on me as if it remembered one or two of my juvenile votes in the house, on the subject of these unhappy dissensions."

"You voted against the Port-Bill," said Polwarth, "out of regard to me?"

"No ; there I joined the ministry. The conduct of the people of Boston had provoked the measure, and there were hardly two minds in Parliament on that question."

"Ah ! Major Lincoln, you are a happy man," said the captain ; "a seat in Parliament at five-and-twenty ! {

must think that I should prefer just such an occupation to all others—the very name is taking ; a seat ! you have two members for your borough—who fills the second now ?”

“ Say nothing on that subject, I entreat you,” whispered Lionel, pressing the arm of the other, as he rose ; “ ’tis not filled by him who should occupy it, as you know.— Shall we descend to the common ? there are many friends that I could wish to see before the bell calls us to church.”

“ Yes ; this is a church-going, or, rather, meeting-going place ; for most of the good people forswear the use of the word church, as we abjure the supremacy of the pope,” returned Polwarth, following in his companion’s footsteps ; “ I never think of attending any of their schism-shops, for I would any day rather stand sentinel over a baggage-wagon than stand up to hear one of their prayers. I can do very well at the King’s Chapel, as they call it ; for when I am once comfortably fixed on my knees, I make out as well as my lord archbishop of Canterbury ; though it has always been matter of surprise to me, how any man can find breath to go through their work of a morning.”

They descended the hill, as Lionel replied, and their forms were soon blended with those of twenty others, who wore scarlet coats, on the common.

CHAPTER V.

“ For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.”—*Hamlet.*

WE must, now, carry the reader back a century, in order to clear our tale of every appearance of ambiguity. Reginald Lincoln was a cadet of an extremely ancient and wealthy family, whose possessions were suffered to continue as appendages to a baronetcy, throughout all the changes which marked the eventful periods of the commonwealth, and the usurpation of Cromwell. He had himself, however, inherited little more than a morbid sensibility, which, even in that age, appeared to be a sort of heirloom to his family. While still a young man, he had married a woman to whom he was much attached, who died in giving birth to her first child. The grief of the husband took a direction toward religion ; but un-

happily, instead of deriving from his researches that healing consolation, with which our faith abounds, his mind became soured by the prevalent, but discordant views of the attributes of the Deity; and the result of his conversion was, to leave him an ascetic puritan, and an obstinate predestinarian. That such a man, finding but little to connect him with his native country, should revolt at the impure practices of the court of Charles, is not surprising; and, accordingly, though not at all implicated in the guilt of the regicides, he departed for the religious province of Massachusetts-Bay, in the first years of the reign of that merry prince.

It was not difficult for a man of the rank and reputed sanctity of Reginald Lincoln, to obtain both honorable and lucrative employments in the plantations; and, after the first glow of his awakened ardor in behalf of spiritual matters had a little abated, he failed not to improve a due portion of his time by a commendable attention to temporal things. To the day of his death, however, he continued a gloomy, austere, and bigoted religionist, seemingly too regardless of the vanities of this world to permit his pure imagination to mingle with its dross, even while he submitted to discharge its visible duties. Notwithstanding this elevation of mind, his son, at the decease of his father, found himself in the possession of many goodly effects; which were, questionless, the accumulations of a neglected use during the days of his sublimated progenitor.

Young Lionel so far followed in the steps of his worthy parent, as to continue gathering honors and riches into his lap; though, owing to an early disappointment, and the inheritance of the "heirloom" already mentioned, it was late in life before he found a partner to share his happiness. Contrary to all the usual calculations that are made on the choice of a man of self-denial, he was then united to a youthful and gay Episcopalian, who had little, beside her exquisite beauty and good blood, to recommend her. By this lady he had four children, three sons and a daughter, when he also was laid in the vault, by the side of his deceased parent. The eldest of these sons was yet a boy when he was called to the mother-country, to inherit the estates and honors of his family. The second, named Reginald, who was bred to arms, married, had a son, and lost his life in the wilds where he was required to serve, before he was five-and-twenty. The third was the grandfather of Agnes Danforth; and the daughter was Mrs. Lechmere.

The family of Lincoln, considering the shortness of their marriages, had been extremely prolific while in the colonies, according to that wise allotment of Providence, which ever seems to regulate the functions of our nature by our wants ; but the instant it was reconveyed to the populous island of Britain, it entirely lost its reputation for fruitfulness. Sir Lionel lived to a good age, married, but died childless ; notwithstanding, when his body lay in state, it was under a splendid roof, and in halls so capacious that they would have afforded comfortable shelter to the whole family of Priam.

By this fatality, it became necessary to cross the Atlantic once more, to find an heir to the wide domains of Ravenscliffe, and to one of the oldest baronetcies in the kingdom.

We have planted and reared this genealogical tree to but little purpose, if it be necessary to tell the reader that the individual, who had now become the head of his race, was the orphan son of the deceased officer. He was married, and the father of one blooming boy, when this elevation, which was not unlooked for, occurred. Leaving his wife and child behind him, Sir Lionel immediately proceeded to England, to assert his rights and secure his possessions. As he was the nephew and acknowledged heir of the late incumbent, he met with no opposition to the more important parts of his claims. Across the character and fortunes of this gentleman, however, a dark cloud had early passed, which prevented the common eye from reading the events of his life, like those of other men, in its open and intelligible movements. After his accession to fortune and rank, but little was known of him, even by his earliest and most intimate associates. It was rumored, it is true, that he had been detained in England, for two years, by a vexatious contention for a petty appendage to his large estates, a controversy which was, however, known to have been decided in his favor, before he was recalled to Boston by the sudden death of his wife. This calamity befell him during the period when the war of '56 was raging in its greatest violence : a time when the energies of the colonies were directed to the assistance of the mother-country, who, according to the language of the day, was zealously endeavoring to defeat the ambitious views of the French, in this hemisphere ; or, what amounted to the same thing in effect, in struggling to advance her own.

It was an interesting period, when the mild and peaceful

colonists were seen to shake off their habits of forbearance, and to enter into the strife with an alacrity and spirit that soon emulated the utmost daring of their more practised confederates. To the amazement of all who knew his fortunes, Sir Lionel Lincoln was seen to embark in many of the most desperate adventures that distinguished the war, with a hardihood that rather sought death than courted honor. He had been, like his father, trained to arms, but the regiment in which he held the commission of lieutenant colonel, was serving his master in the most eastern of his dominions, while the uneasy soldier was thus rushing from point to point, hazarding his life, and more than once shedding his blood, in the enterprises that signalized his war in his most western.

This dangerous career, however, was at length suddenly and mysteriously checked. By the influence of some powerful agency that was never explained, the baron was induced to take his son, and embark once more for the land of their fathers, from which the former had never been known to return. For many years, all those inquiries which the laudable curiosity of the townsmen and townswomen of Mrs. Lechmere, prompted them to make, concerning the fate of her nephew, (and we leave each of our readers to determine their numbers,) were answered by that lady with the most courteous reserve ; and sometimes with such exhibitions of emotion, as we have already attempted to describe in her first interview with his son. But constant dropping will wear away a stone. At first there were rumors that the baronet had committed treason, and had been compelled to exchange Ravenscliffe for a less comfortable dwelling in the Tower of London. This report was succeeded by that of an unfortunate private marriage with one of the princesses of the house of Brunswick ; but a reference to the calendars of the day showed, that there was no lady of a suitable age disengaged ; and this amour, so creditable to the provinces, was necessarily abandoned. Finally, the assertion was made, with much more of the confidence of truth, that the unhappy Sir Lionel was the tenant of a private mad-house.

The instant this rumor was circulated, a film fell from every eye, and none were so blind as not to have seen indications of insanity in the baronet long before ; and not a few were enabled to trace his legitimate right to lunacy through the hereditary bias of his race. To account for its sudden exhibition, was a more difficult task and exer-

cised the ingenuity of an exceedingly ingenious people, for a long period.

The more sentimental part of the community, such as the maidens and bachelors, and those votaries of Hymen who had twice and thrice proved the solacing power of the god, did not fail to ascribe the misfortune of the baronet to the unhappy loss of his wife ; a lady to whom he was known to be most passionately attached. A few, the relics of the good old school, under whose intellectual sway the incarnate persons of so many godless dealers in necromancy had been made to expiate for their abominations, pointed to the calamity as a merited punishment on the backslidings of a family that had once known the true faith ; while the third, and by no means a small class, composed of those worthies who braved the elements in King Street, in quest of filthy lucre, did not hesitate to say, that the sudden acquisition of vast wealth had driven many a better man mad. But the time was approaching, when the apparently irresistible propensity to speculate on the fortunes of a fellow-creature was made to yield to more important considerations. The hour soon arrived when the merchant forgot his momentary interests to look keenly into the distant effects that were to succeed the movements of the day ; which taught the fanatic the wholesome lesson, that Providence smiled most beneficently on those who most merited, by their own efforts, its favors ; and which even purged the breast of the sentimentalist of its sickly tenant, to be succeeded by the healthy and ennobling passion of love of country.

It was about this period that the contest for principle between the Parliament of Great Britain, and the colonies of North America, commenced, that in time led to those important results which have established a new era in political liberty, as well as a mighty empire. A brief glance at the nature of this controversy may assist in rendering many of the allusions in this legend more intelligible to some of its readers.

The increasing wealth of the provinces had attracted the notice of the English ministry so early as the year 1763. In that year the first effort to raise a revenue which was to meet the exigencies of the empire, was attempted by the passage of a law to impose a duty on certain stamped paper, which was made necessary to give validity to contracts. This method of raising a revenue was not new in itself, nor was the imposition heavy in amount. But

the Americans, not less sagacious than wary, perceived at a glance the importance of the principles involved in the admission of a right as belonging to any body to lay taxes, in which they were not represented. The question was not without its difficulties, but the direct and plain argument was clearly on the side of the colonists. Aware of the force of their reasons, and perhaps a little conscious of the strength of their numbers, they approached the subject with a spirit which betokened this consciousness, but with a coolness that denoted the firmness of their purpose. After a struggle of nearly two years, during which the law was rendered completely profitless by the unanimity among the people, as well as by a species of good-humored violence that rendered it exceedingly inconvenient, and perhaps a little dangerous, to the servants of the crown to exercise their obnoxious functions, the ministry abandoned the measure. But, at the same time that the law was repealed, the Parliament maintained its right to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever, by recording a resolution to that effect in its journals.

That an empire, whose several parts were separated by oceans, and whose interests were so often conflicting, should become unwieldy, and fall, in time, by its own weight, was an event that all wise men must have expected to arrive. But, that the Americans did not contemplate such a division at that early day, may be fairly inferred, if there were no other testimony in the matter, by the quiet and submission that pervaded the colonies the instant that the repeal of the stamp act was known. Had any desire for premature independence existed, the Parliament had unwisely furnished abundant fuel to feed the flame, in the very resolution already mentioned. But, satisfied with the solid advantages they had secured, peaceful in their habits, and loyal in their feelings, the colonists laughed at the empty dignity of their self-constituted rulers, while they congratulated each other on their own more substantial success. If the besotted servants of the King had learned wisdom by the past, the storm would have blown over, and another age would have witnessed the events which we are about to relate. Things were hardly suffered, however, to return to their old channels again, before the ministry attempted to revive their claims by new impositions. The design to raise a revenue had been defeated in the case of the stamp act, by the refusal of the colonists to use the paper; but in

the present instance, expedients were adopted, which, it was thought, would be more effective—as in the case of tea, where the duty was paid by the East-India Company in the first instance, and the exaction was to be made on the Americans, through their appetites. These new innovations on their rights were met by the colonists with the same promptitude, but with much more of seriousness than in the former instances. All the provinces south of the Great Lakes, acted in concert on this occasion; and preparations were made to render not only their remonstrances and petitions more impressive by a unity of action, but their more serious struggles also, should an appeal to force become necessary. The tea was stored or sent back to England, in most cases, though in the town of Boston, a concurrence of circumstances led to the violent measure, on the part of the people, of throwing a large quantity of the offensive article into the sea. To punish this act, which took place in the early part of 1774, the port of Boston was closed, and different laws were enacted in Parliament, which were intended to bring the people back to a sense of their dependence on the British power.

Although the complaints of the colonists were hushed during the short interval that had succeeded the suspension of the efforts of the ministry to tax them, the feelings of alienation which were engendered by the attempt, had not time to be lost before the obnoxious subject was revived in its new shape. From 1763 to the period of our tale, all the younger part of the population of the provinces had grown into manhood, but they were no longer imbued with that profound respect for the mother-country which had been transmitted from their ancestors, or with that deep loyalty to the crown that usually characterizes a people who view the pageant of royalty through the medium of distance. Still, those who guided the feelings, and controlled the judgments of the Americans, were averse to a dismemberment of the empire, a measure which they continued to believe both impolitic and unnatural.

In the meantime, though equally reluctant to shed blood, the adverse parties prepared for that final struggle, which seemed to be unavoidably approaching. The situation of the colonies was now so peculiar, that it may be doubted whether history furnishes a precise parallel. Their fealty to the prince was everywhere acknowledged,

while the laws which emanated from his counsellors were sullenly disregarded and set at naught. Each province possessed its distinct government, and in most of them the political influence of the crown was direct and great; but the time had arrived when it was superseded by a moral feeling that defied the machinations and intrigues of the ministry. Such of the provincial legislatures as possessed a majority of the "Sons of Liberty," as they who resisted the unconstitutional attempts of the ministry were termed, elected delegates to meet in a general congress to consult on the ways and means of effecting the common objects. In one or two provinces, where the inequality of representation afforded a different result, the people supplied the deficiencies by acting in their original capacity. This body, meeting, unlike conspirators, with the fearless confidence of integrity, and acting under the excitement of a revolution in sentiment, possessed an influence, which at a later day, has been denied to their more legally constituted successors. Their recommendations possessed all the validity of laws, without incurring their odium. While, as the organ of their fellow-subjects, they still continued to petition and remonstrate, they did not forget to oppose, by such means as were then thought expedient, the oppressive measures of the ministry.

An association was recommended to the people, for those purposes that are amply expressed in the three divisions which were significantly given to the subjects, in calling them by the several names of "non-importation," "non-exportation," and "non-consumption" resolutions. These negative expedients were all that was constitutionally in their power, and, throughout the whole controversy, there had been a guarded care not to exceed the limits which the laws had affixed to the rights of the subject. Though no overt act of resistance was committed, they did not, however, neglect such means as were attainable to be prepared for the last evil, whenever it should arrive.* In this manner a feeling of resentment and disaffection was daily increasing throughout the provinces, while in Massachusetts Bay, the more immediate scene of our story, the disorder in the body politic seemed to be inevitably gathering to its head.

The great principles of the controversy had been blended, in different places, with various causes of local complaint, and in none more than in the town of Boston. The inhabitants of this place had been distinguished for

an early, open, and fearless resistance to the ministry. An armed force had long been thought necessary to intimidate this spirit, to effect which the troops were drawn from different parts of the provinces, and concentrated in this devoted town. Early in 1774, a military man was placed in the executive chair of the province, and an attitude of more determination was assumed by the government. One of the first acts of this gentleman, who held the high station of lieutenant general, and who commanded all the forces of the king in America, was to dissolve the colonial assembly. About the same time a new charter was sent from England, and a material change was contemplated in the polity of the colonial government. From this moment the power of the king, though it was not denied, became suspended in the province. A provincial congress was elected, and assembled within seven leagues of the capital, where they continued, from time to time, to adopt such measures as the exigencies of the times were thought to render necessary. Men were enrolled, disciplined, and armed, as well as the imperfect means of the colony would allow. These troops, who were no more than the élite of the inhabitants, had little else to recommend them besides their spirit, and their manual dexterity with fire-arms. From the expected nature of their service, they were not unaptly termed "minute-men." The munitions of war were seized, and hoarded with a care and diligence that showed the character of the impending conflict.

On the other hand, General Gage adopted a similar course of preparation and prevention, by fortifying himself in the strong hold which he possessed, and by anticipating the intentions of the colonists, in their attempts to form magazines, whenever it was in his power. He had an easy task in the former, both from the natural situation of the place he occupied, and the species of force he commanded.

Surrounded by broad and chiefly by deep waters, except at one extremely narrow point, and possessing its triple hills, which are not commanded by any adjacent eminences, the peninsula of Boston could, with a competent garrison, easily be made impregnable, especially when aided by a superior fleet. The works erected by the English general were, however, by no means of magnitude ; for it was well known that the whole park of the colonists could not exceed some half dozen pieces of field artillery, with a small battering train that must be entirely composed of

old and cumbrous ship guns. Consequently, when Lionel arrived in Boston, he found a few batteries thrown up on the eminences, some of which were intended as much to control the town as to repel an enemy from without, while lines were drawn across the neck which communicated with the main. The garrison consisted of something less than five thousand men, besides which there was a fluctuating force of seamen and marines, as the vessels of war arrived and departed.

All this time, there was no other interruption to the intercourse between the town and the country, than such as unavoidably succeeded the stagnation of trade, and the distrust engendered by the aspect of affairs. Though numberless families had deserted their homes, many known whigs continued to dwell in their habitations, where their ears were deafened by the sounds of the British drums, and where their spirits were but too often galled by the sneers of the officers on the uncouth military preparations of their countrymen. Indeed, an impression had spread further than among the idle and thoughtless youths of the army, that the colonists were but little gifted with martial qualities ; and many of their best friends in Europe were in dread, lest an appeal to force should put the contested points forever at rest, by proving the incompetency of the Americans to maintain them to the last extremity.

In this manner, both parties stood at bay ; the people living in perfect order and quiet, without the administration of law, sullen, vigilant, and, through their leaders, secretly alert ; and the army, gay, haughty, and careless of the consequences, though far from being oppressive or insolent, until after the defeat of one or two abortive excursions into the country in quest of arms. Each hour, however, was rapidly adding to the disaffection on one side, and to the contempt and resentment on the other, through numberless public and private causes, that belong rather to history than to a legend like this. All extraordinary occupations were suspended, and men awaited the course of things in anxious expectation. It was known that the Parliament, instead of retracing their political errors, had imposed new restraints, and, as has been mentioned, it was also rumored that regiments and fleets were on their way to enforce them.

How long a country could exist in such a primeval condition remained to be seen, though it was difficult to say when or how it was to terminate. The people of the land

appeared to slumber ; but, like vigilant and wary soldiers, they might be said to sleep on their arms ; while the troops assumed, each day, more of that fearful preparation which gives, even to the trained warrior, a more martial aspect—though both parties still continued to manifest a becoming reluctance to shed blood.

CHAPTER VI.

“Would he were fatter :—but I fear him not :—
Seldom he smiles ; and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.”

—*Julius Cæsar.*

IN the course of the succeeding week, Lionel acquired a knowledge of many minor circumstances relating to the condition of the colonies, which may be easily imagined as incidental to the times, but which would greatly exceed our limits to relate. He was received by his brethren in arms, with that sort of cordiality that a rich, high-spirited, and free, if not a jovial comrade, was certain of meeting among men who lived chiefly for pleasure and appearance. Certain indications of more than usually important movements were discovered among the troops, the first day of the week, and his own condition in the army was in some measure affected by the changes. Instead of joining his particular regiment, he was ordered to hold himself in readiness to take a command in the light corps, which had begun its drill for the service that was peculiar to such troops. As it was well known that Boston was Major Lionel's place of nativity, the commander-in-chief, with the indulgence and kindness of his character, granted to him, however, a short respite from duty, in order that he might indulge in the feelings natural to his situation. It was soon generally understood, that Major Lincoln, though intending to serve with the army in America, should the sad alternative of an appeal to arms become necessary, had permission to amuse himself in such a manner as he saw fit, for two months from the date of his arrival. Those who affected to be more wise than common, saw, or thought they saw, in this arrangement, a deep laid plan on the part of Gage, to use the influence and

address of the young provincial among his connections and natural friends, to draw them back to those sentiments of loyalty which it was feared so many among them had forgotten to entertain. But it was the characteristic of the times to attach importance to trifling incidents, and to suspect a concealed policy in movements which emanated only in inclination.

There was nothing, however, in the deportment, or manner of life adopted by Lionel, to justify any of these conjectures. He continued to dwell in the house of Mrs. Lechmere, in person, though, unwilling to burden the hospitality of his aunt too heavily, he had taken lodgings in a dwelling at no great distance, where his servants resided, and where it was generally understood, that his visits of ceremony and friendship were to be received. Captain Polwarth did not fail to complain loudly of this arrangement, as paralyzing at once all the advantages he had anticipated from enjoying the *entré* to the dwelling of his mistress, in the right of his friend. But as the establishment of Lionel was supported with much of that liberality which was becoming in a youth of his large fortune, the exuberant light-infantry officer found many sources of consolation in the change, which could not have existed, had the staid Mrs. Lechmere presided over the domestic department. Lionel and Polwarth had been boys together at the same school, members of the same college at Oxford, and subsequently, for many years, comrades in the same corps. Though, perhaps, no two men in their regiment were more essentially different in mental as well as physical constitution, yet, by that unaccountable caprice, which causes us to like our opposites, it is certain that no two gentlemen in the service were known to be on better terms, or to maintain a more close and unreserved intimacy. It is unnecessary to dilate here on this singular friendship: it occurs every day, between men still more discordant, the result of accident and habit, and is often, as in the present instance, cemented by unconquerable good-nature in one of the parties. For this latter qualification Captain Polwarth was eminent, if for no other. It contributed quite as much as his science in the art of living to the thriving condition of the corporeal moiety of the man, and it rendered a communion with the less material part at all times inoffensive, if not agreeable.

On the present occasion, the captain took charge of the internal economy of Lionel's lodgings, with a zeal which

he did not even pretend was disinterested. By the rules of the regiment he was compelled to live nominally with the mess, where he found his talents and his wishes fettered by divers indispensable regulations, and economical practices, that could not be easily overleaped; but with Lionel, just such an opportunity offered for establishing rules of his own, and disregarding expenditure, as he had been long pining for in secret. Though the poor of the town were, in the absence of employment, necessarily supported by large contributions of money, clothing, and food, which were transmitted to their aid from the furthestmost parts of the colonies, the markets were not yet wanting in all the necessaries of life, to those who enjoyed the means of purchasing. With this disposition of things, therefore, he became well content, and within the first fortnight after the arrival of Lionel, it became known to the mess that Captain Polwarth took his dinners regularly with his old friend, Major Lincoln; though in truth the latter was enjoying, more than half the time, the hospitality of the respective tables of the officers of the staff.

In the meantime Lionel cultivated his acquaintance in Tremont Street, where he still slept, with an interest and assiduity that the awkwardness of his first interview would not have taught us to expect. With Mrs. Lechmere, it is true, he made but little progress in intimacy; for, equally formal, though polite, she was at all times enshrouded in a cloud of artificial, but cold management, that gave him little opportunity, had he possessed the desire, to break through the reserve of her calculating temperament. With his more youthful kinswomen, the case was, however, in a very few days, entirely reversed. Agnes Danforth, who had nothing to conceal, began insensibly to yield to the manliness and grace of his manner, and before the end of the first week, she maintained the rights of the colonists, laughed at the follies of the officers, and then acknowledged her own prejudices, with a familiarity and good-humor that soon made her, in her turn, a favorite with her English cousin, as she termed Lionel. But he found the demeanor of Cecil Dynevor much more embarrassing, if not inexplicable. For days she would be distant, silent, and haughty, and then again, as it were by sudden impulses, she became easy and natural; her whole soul beaming in her speaking eyes, or her innocent and merry humor breaking through the bounds of her restraint, and rendering not only herself, but all around her, happy and

delighted. Full many an hour did Lionel ponder on this unaccountable difference in the manner of this young lady, at different moments. There was a secret excitement in the very caprices of her humors, that had a piquant interest in his eyes, and which, aided by her exquisite form and intelligent face, gradually induced him to become a more close observer of their waywardness, and consequently a more assiduous attendant on her movements. In consequence of this assiduity, the manner of Cecil grew, almost imperceptibly, less variable, and more uniformly fascinating, while Lionel, by some unaccountable oversight, soon forgot to note its changes, or even to miss the excitement.

In a mixed society, where pleasure, company, and a multitude of objects, conspired to distract the attention, such alterations would be the result of an intercourse for months, if they ever occurred ; but in a town like Boston, from which most of those with whom Cecil had once mingled were already fled, and where, consequently, those who remained behind lived chiefly for themselves and by themselves, it was no more than the obvious effect of very apparent causes. In this manner something like goodwill, if not a deeper interest in each other was happily effected within that memorable fortnight, which was teeming with events vastly more important in their results than any that can appertain to the fortunes of a single family.

The winter of 1774-5 had been as remarkable for its mildness, as the spring was cold and lingering. Like every season in our changeable climate, however, the chilling days of March and April were intermingled with some, when a genial sun recalled the ideas of summer, which, in their turn, were succeeded by others, when the torrents of cold rain, that drove before the easterly gales, would seem to repel every advance toward a milder temperature. Many of those stormy days occurred in the middle of April, and during their continuance Lionel was necessarily compelled to keep himself housed.

He had retired from the parlor of Mrs. Lechmere, one evening when the rain was beating against the windows of the house, in nearly horizontal lines, to complete some letters which, before dining, he had commenced to the agent of his family, in England. On entering his own apartment, he was startled to find the room, which he had left vacant, and which he expected to find in the same state, occupied in a manner that he could not anticipate.

The light of a strong wood fire was blazing on the hearth, and throwing about, in playful changes, the flickering shadows of the furniture, and magnifying each object into some strange and fantastical figure. As he stepped within the door, his eye fell upon one of these shadows, which extended along the wall, and, bending against the ceiling, exhibited the gigantic but certain outlines of the human form. Recollecting that he had left his letters open, and a little distrusting the discretion of Meriton, Lionel advanced lightly, for a few feet, so far as to be able to look round the drapery of his bed, and, to his amazement, perceived that the intruder was not his valet, but the aged stranger. The old man sat holding in his hand the open letter which Lionel had been writing, and continued so deeply absorbed in its contents, that the footsteps of the other were still disregarded. A large, coarse overcoat, dripping with water, concealed most of his person, though the white hairs that strayed about his face, and the deep lines of his remarkable countenance, could not be mistaken.

"I was ignorant of this unexpected visit," said Lionel, advancing quickly into the centre of the room, "or I should not have been so tardy in returning to my apartment, where, sir, I fear you must have found your time irksome, with nothing but that scrawl to amuse you."

The old man dropped the paper from before his features, and betrayed, by the action, the large drops that followed each other down his hollow cheeks, until they fell even to the floor. The haughty and displeased look disappeared from the countenance of Lionel at this sight, and he was on the point of speaking in a more conciliating manner, when the stranger, whose eye had not quailed before the angry frown it encountered, anticipated his intention.

"I comprehend you, Major Lincoln," he said, calmly; "but there can exist justifiable reasons for a greater breach of faith than this, of which you accuse me. Accident, and not intention, has put me in possession, here, of your most secret thoughts on a subject that has deep interest for me. You have urged me often, during our voyage, to make you acquainted with all that you most desire to know; to which request, as you may remember, I have ever been silent."

"You have said, sir, that you are master of a secret in which my feelings, I will acknowledge, are deeply interested; and I have urged you to remove my doubts by declaring the truth; but I do not perceive——"

"How a desire to possess my secret gives me a claim to inquire into yours, you would say," interrupted the stranger; "nor does it. But an interest in your affairs, that you cannot yet understand, and which is vouched for by these scalding tears, the first that have fallen in years from a fountain that I had thought dried, should, and must, satisfy you."

"It does," said Lionel, deeply affected by the melancholy tones of his voice, "it does, it does, and I will listen to no further explanation on the unpleasant subject. You see nothing there, I am sure, of which a son can have reason to be ashamed."

"I see much here, Lionel Lincoln, of which a father would have reason to be proud," returned the old man. "It was the filial love which you have displayed in this paper, which has drawn these drops from my eyes; for he who has lived as I have done, beyond the age of man, without knowing the love that the parent feels for its offspring, or which the child bears to the author of its being, must have outlived his natural sympathies, not to be conscious of his misfortune, when chance makes him sensible of affections like these."

"You have never been a father, then?" said Lionel, drawing a chair nigh to his aged companion, and seating himself with an air of powerful interest, that he could not control.

"Have I not told you that I am alone?" returned the old man, with a solemn manner. After an impressive pause, he continued, though his tones were husky and low—"I have been both husband and parent, in my day, but 'tis so long since, that no selfish tie remains to bind me to earth. Old age is the neighbor of death, and the chill of the grave is to be found in its warmest breathings."

"Say not so," interrupted Lionel, "for you do injustice to your own warm nature—you forget your zeal in behalf of what you deem these oppressed colonies."

"'Tis no more than the flickering of the dying lamp, which flares and dazzles most when its source of heat is highest to extinction. But though I may not infuse into your bosom a warmth that I do not possess myself, I can point out the dangers with which life abounds, and serve as a beacon, when no longer useful as a pilot. It is for such a purpose, Major Lincoln, that I have braved the tempest of to-night."

"Has anything occurred, which, by rendering danger pressing, can make such an exposure necessary?"

"Look at me," said the old man, earnestly—"I have seen most of this flourishing country a wilderness; my recollection goes back into those periods when the savage, and the beast of the forest, contended with our fathers for much of that soil which now supports its hundreds of thousands in plenty; and my time is to be numbered, not by years, but by ages. For such a being, think you there can yet be many months, or weeks, or even days, in store?"

Lionel dropped his eyes, in embarrassment, to the floor, as he answered—

"You cannot have very many years, surely, to hope for; but with the activity and temperance you possess, days and months confine you, I trust, in limits much too small."

"What!" exclaimed the other, stretching forth a colorless hand, in which even the prominent veins partook in the appearance of a general decay of nature; "with these wasted limbs, these gray hairs, and this sunken and sepulchral cheek, would you talk to me of years! to me, who have not the effrontery to petition for even minutes, were they worth the prayer—so long already has been my probation!"

"It is certainly time to think of the change, when it approaches so very near."

"Well, then, Lionel Lincoln, old, feeble, and on the threshold of eternity as I stand, yet am I not nearer to my grave than that country, to which you have pledged your blood, is to a mighty convulsion, which will shake her institutions to their foundations."

"I cannot admit the signs of the times to be quite so portentous as your fears would make them," said Lionel, smiling a little proudly. "Though the worst that is apprehended should arrive, England will feel the shock but as the earth bears an eruption of one of its volcanoes! But we talk in idle figures, sir: know you anything to justify the apprehension of immediate danger?"

The face of the stranger lighted with a sudden and startling gleam of intelligence, and a sarcastic smile passed across his wan features, as he answered slowly—

"They only have cause to fear who will be the losers by the change! A youth who casts off the trammels of his guardians is not apt to doubt his ability to govern himself. England has held these colonies so long in leading-strings, that she forgets her offspring is able to go alone."

"Now, sir, you exceed even the wild projects of the most daring among those who call themselves the 'Sons of Liberty'—as if liberty existed in any place more favored or more nurtured than under the blessed constitution of England! The utmost required is what they term a redress of grievances, many of which, I must think, exist only in imagination."

"Was a stone ever known to roll upward? Let there be but one drop of American blood spilt in anger, and its stain will become indelible."

"Unhappily, the experiment has been already tried; and yet years have rolled by, while England keeps her footing and authority good."

"Her authority!" repeated the old man; "see you not, Major Lincoln, in the forbearance of this people, when they felt themselves in the wrong, the existence of the very principles that will render them invincible and unyielding when right? But we waste our time—I came to conduct you to a place where, with your own ears, and with your own eyes, you may hear and see a little of that spirit which pervades the land—You will follow?"

"Not surely in such a tempest!"

"This tempest is but a trifle to that which is about to break upon you, unless you retrace your steps; but follow, I repeat; if a man of my years disregards the night, ought an English soldier to hesitate?"

The pride of Lionel was touched; and remembering an engagement he had previously made with his aged friend to accompany him to a scene like this, he made such changes in his dress as would serve to conceal his profession, threw on a large cloak to protect his person, and was about to lead the way himself, when he was aroused by the voice of the other.

"You mistake the route," he said; "this is to be a secret, and I hope a profitable visit—none must know of your presence; and if you are a worthy son of your honorable father, I need hardly add that my faith is pledged for your discretion."

"The pledge will be respected, sir," said Lionel, haughtily; "but in order to see what you wish, we are not to remain here?"

"Follow, then, and be silent," said the old man, turning and opening the doors which led into a little apartment lighted by one of those smaller windows, already mentioned in describing the exterior of the building. The passage

was dark and narrow ; but, observing the warnings of his companion, Lionel succeeded in descending, in safety, a flight of steps which formed a private communication between the offices of the dwelling and its upper apartments. They paused an instant at the bottom of the stairs, where the youth expressed his amazement that a stranger should be so much more familiar with the building than he who had for so many days made it his home.

"Have I not often told you," returned the old man, with a severity in his voice which was even apparent in its suppressed tones, "that I have known Boston for near a hundred years ! How many edifices like this does it contain, that I should not have noted its erection ! But follow in silence, and be prudent."

He now opened a door which conducted them through one end of the building, into the courtyard in which it was situated. As they emerged into the open air, Lionel perceived the figure of a man, crouching under the walls, as if seeking a shelter from the driving rain. The moment they appeared, this person arose, and followed as they moved toward the street.

"Are we not watched ?" said Lionel, stopping to face the unknown ; "whom have we skulking in our footsteps ?"

"'Tis the boy," said the old man,—for whom we must adopt the name of Ralph, which it would appear was the usual term used by Job when addressing his mother's guest—" 'tis the boy, and he can do us no harm. God has granted to him a knowledge between much of what is good, and that which is evil, though the mind of the child is, at times, sadly weakened by his bodily ailings. His heart, however, is with his country, at a moment when she needs all hearts to maintain her rights."

The young British officer bowed his head to meet the tempest, and smiled scornfully within the folds of his cloak, which he drew more closely around his form, as they met the gale in the open streets of the town. They had passed swiftly through many narrow and crooked ways, before another word was uttered between the adventurers. Lionel mused on the singular and indefinable interest that he took in the movements of his companion, which could draw him at a time like this from the shelter of Mrs. Lechmere's roof, to wander he knew not whither, and on an errand which might even be dangerous to his person. Still he followed, unhesitatingly ; for with these passing thoughts

was blended the recollection of the many recent and interesting communications he had held with the old man during their long and close association in the ship ; nor was he wanting in a natural interest for all that involved the safety and happiness of the place of his birth. He kept the form of his aged guide in his eye, as the other moved before him, careless of the tempest which beat on his withered frame, and he heard the heavy footsteps of Job in his rear, who had closed so near his own person as to share, in some measure, in the shelter of his ample cloak. But no other living being seemed to have ventured abroad ; and even the few sentinels they passed, instead of pacing in front of those doors which it was their duty to guard, were concealed behind the angles of walls, or sought shelter under the projections of some favoring roof. At moments the wind rushed into the narrow avenues of the streets, along which it swept, with a noise not unlike the hollow roaring of the sea, and with a violence which was nearly irresistible. At such times Lionel was compelled to pause, and even frequently to recede a little from his path, while his guide, supported by his high purpose, and but little obstructed by his garments, seemed, to the bewildered imagination of his follower, to glide through the night with a facility that was supernatural. At length the old man, who had got some distance ahead of his followers, suddenly paused, and allowed Lionel to approach to his side. The latter observed with surprise, that he had stopped before the root and stump of a tree, which had once grown on the borders of the street, and which appeared to have been recently felled.

"Do you see this remnant of the elm ?" said Ralph, when the others had stopped also ; "their axes have succeeded in destroying the mother-plant, but her scions are flourishing throughout the continent !"

"I do not comprehend you !" returned Lionel ; "I see here nothing but the stump of some tree ; surely the ministers of the king are not answerable that it stands no longer ?"

"The ministers of the king are answerable to their master, that it has ever become what it is—but speak to the boy at your side ; he will tell you of its virtues."

Lionel turned towards Job, and perceived by the obscure light of the moon, to his surprise, that the changeling stood with his head bared to the storm, regarding the root with an extraordinary degree of reverence.

"This is all a mystery to me!" he said; "what do you know about this stump to stand in awe of, boy?"

"'Tis the root of 'Liberty-tree,'" said Job, "and 'tis wicked to pass it without making your manners!"

"And what has this tree done for liberty, that it has merited so much respect?"

"What! why, did you ever see a tree afore this that could write and give notices of town-meetin'-da's, or that could tell the people what the king meant to do with the tea and his stamps!"

"And could this marvellous tree work such miracles?"

"To be sure it could, and it did too—you let stingy Tommy think to get above the people with any of his cunning over night, and you might come here next morning, and read a warning on the bark of this tree, that would tell all about it, and how to put down his deviltries, written out fair, in a hand as good as Master Lovell himself could put on paper, the best day of his grand scholarship."

"And who put the paper there?"

"Who!" exclaimed Job, a little positively; "why, Liberty came in the night, and pasted it up herself. When Nab couldn't get a house to live in, Job used to sleep, under the tree, sometimes; and many a night has he seen Liberty, with his own eyes, come and put up the paper."

"And was it a woman?"

"Do you think Liberty was such a fool as to come every time in woman's clothes, to be followed by the rake-helly soldiers about the streets!" said Job, with great contempt in his manner. "Sometimes she did, though, and sometimes she didn't; just as it happened. And Job was in the tree when old Noll had to give up his ungodly stamps; though he didn't do it till the 'Sons of Liberty' had chucked his stamp-shop in the dock, and hung him and Lord Boot together, on the branches of the old Elm!"

"Hung!" said Lionel, unconsciously drawing back from the spot. "Was it ever a gallows?"

"Yes, for iffigies," said Job, laughing; "I wish you could have been here to see how the old boot, with Satan sticking out on't, whirled about when they swung it off! They give the old boy a big shoe to put his cloven huff in!"

Lionel, who was familiar with the peculiar sound that his townsmen gave to the letter *u*, now comprehended the allusion to the Earl of Bute, and, beginning to understand more clearly the nature of the transactions, and the uses

to which that memorable tree had been applied, he expressed his desire to proceed.

The old man had suffered Job to make his own explanations, though not without a curious interest in the effect they would produce on Lionel ; but the instant the request was made to advance, he turned, and once more led the way. Their course was now directed more toward the wharves ; nor was it long before their conductor turned into a narrow court, and entered a house of rather mean appearance, without even observing the formality of announcing his visit by the ordinary summons of rapping at its door. A long, narrow, and dimly-lighted passage conducted them to a spacious apartment far in the court, which appeared to have been fitted as a place for the reception of large assemblages of people. In this room were collected at least a hundred men, seemingly intent on some object of more than usual interest, by the gravity and seriousness of demeanor apparent in every countenance.

As it was Sunday, the first impression of Lionel, on entering the room, was that his old friend, who often betrayed a keen sensibility on subjects of religion, had brought him there with a design to listen to some favorite exhorter of his own peculiar tenets, and as a tacit reproach for a neglect of the usual ordinances of that holy day, of which the conscience of the young man suddenly accused him, on finding himself unexpectedly mingled in such a throng. But after he had forced his person among a dense body of men, who stood at the lower end of the apartment, and became a silent observer of the scene, he was soon made to perceive his error. The weather had induced all present to appear in such garments as were best adapted to protect them from its fury ; and their exteriors were rough, and perhaps a little forbidding ; but there was a composure and decency in the air common to the whole assembly, which denoted that they were men who possessed, in a high degree, the commanding quality of self-respect. A very few minutes sufficed to teach Lionel that he was in the midst of a meeting collected to discuss questions connected with the political movements of the times, though he felt himself a little at a loss to discover the precise results it was intended to produce. To every question there were one or two speakers, men who expressed their ideas in a familiar manner, and with the peculiar tones and pronunciation of the province, that left no room to believe them to be orators of a higher character than

the mechanics and tradesmen of the town. Most, if not all of them, wore an air of deliberation and coldness that would have rendered their sincerity in the cause they had apparently espoused a little equivocal, but for occasional expressions of coarse, and sometimes biting, invective that they expended on the ministers of the crown, and for the perfect and firm unanimity that was manifested, as each expression of the common feeling was taken, after the manner of deliberative bodies. Certain resolutions, in which the most respectful remonstrances were singularly blended with the boldest assertions of constitutional principles, were read and passed without a dissenting voice, though with a calmness that indicated no very strong excitement. Lionel was peculiarly struck with the language of these written opinions, which were expressed with a purity, and sometimes with an elegance of style, which plainly showed that the acquaintance of the sober artisan with the instrument through whose periods he was blundering was quite recent, and far from being very intimate. The eyes of the young soldier wandered from face to face, with a strong desire to detect the secret movers of the scene he was witnessing; nor was he long without selecting one individual as an object peculiarly deserving of his suspicions. It was a man apparently but just entering into middle age, of an appearance, both in person and in such parts of his dress as escaped from beneath his overcoat, that denoted him to be of a class altogether superior to the mass of the assembly. A deep but manly respect was evidently paid to this gentleman by those who stood nearest to his person; and once or twice there were close and earnest communications passing between him and the more ostensible leaders of the meeting, which roused the suspicions of Lionel in the manner related. Notwithstanding the secret dislike that the English officer suddenly conceived against a man that he fancied was thus abusing his powers, by urging others to acts of insubordination, he could not conceal from himself the favorable impression made by the open, fearless, and engaging countenance of the stranger. Lionel was so situated as to be able to keep his person, which was partly concealed by the taller forms that surrounded him, in constant view; nor was it long before his earnest and curious gaze caught the attention of the other. Glances of marked meaning were exchanged between them during the remainder of the evening, until the chairman announced that the ob-

jects of the convocation were accomplished, and dissolved the meeting.

Lionel raised himself from his reclining attitude against the wall, and submitted to be carried by the current of human bodies into the dark passage, through which he had entered the room. Here he lingered a moment, with a view to recover his lost companion, and with a secret wish to scan more narrowly the proceedings of the man, whose air and manner had so long chained his attention. The crowd had sensibly diminished before he was aware that few remained beside himself, nor would he then have discovered that he was likely to become an object of suspicion to those few, had not a voice at his elbow recalled his recollection.

"Does Major Lincoln meet his countrymen to-night as one who sympathizes in their wrongs, or as the favored and prosperous officer of the crown?" asked the very man for whose person he had so long been looking in vain.

"Is sympathy with the oppressed incompatible with loyalty to my prince?" demanded Lionel.

"That it is not," said the stranger, in a friendly accent, "is apparent from the conduct of many gallant Englishmen among us, who espouse our cause.—but we claim Major Lincoln as a countryman."

"Perhaps, sir, it would be indiscreet just now to disavow that title, let my dispositions be as they may," returned Lionel, smiling a little haughtily; "this may not be as secure a spot in which to avow one's sentiments, as the town common, or the palace of St. James."

"Had the king been present to-night, Major Lincoln, would he have heard a single sentence opposed to that constitution, which has declared him a member too sacred to be offended?"

"Whatever may have been the legality of your sentiments, sir, they surely have not been expressed in language altogether fit for a royal ear."

"It may not have been adulation, or even flattery, but it is truth—a quality no less sacred than the rights of kings."

"This is neither a place nor an occasion, sir," said the young soldier, quickly, "to discuss the rights of our common master; but if, as from your manner and your language I think not improbable, we should meet hereafter in a higher sphere, you will not find me at a loss to vindicate his claims."

The stranger smiled with meaning, and as he bowed before he fell back and was lost in the darkness of the passage, he replied—

“Our fathers have often met in such society, I believe; God forbid that their sons should ever encounter in a less friendly manner.”

Lionel, now finding himself alone, groped his way into the street, where he perceived Ralph and the changeling in waiting for his appearance. Without demanding the cause of the other's delay, the old man proceeded by the side of his companions, with the same indifference to the tempest as before, toward the residence of Mrs. Lechmere.

“You have now had some evidence of the spirit that pervades this people,” said Ralph, after a few moments of silence; “think you still there is no danger that the volcano will explode?”

“Surely everything I have heard and seen to-night confirms such an opinion,” returned Lionel. “Men on the threshold of rebellion seldom reason so closely, and with such moderation. Why, the very fuel for the combustion, the rabble themselves, discuss their constitutional principles, and keep under the mantle of law, as though they were a club of learned Templars.”

“Think you that the fire will burn less steadily, because what you call the fuel has been prepared by the seasoning of time?” returned Ralph. “But this comes from sending a youth into a foreign land for his education! The boy rates his sober and earnest countrymen on a level with the peasants of Europe.”

So much Lionel was able to comprehend; but notwithstanding the old man muttered vehemently to himself for some time longer, it was in a tone too indistinct for his ear to understand his meaning. When they arrived in a part of the town, with which Lionel was familiar, his aged guide pointed out his way, and took his leave, saying—

“I see that nothing but the last, and dreadful argument of force, will convince you of the purpose of the Americans to resist their oppressors. God avert the evil hour! but when it shall come, as come it must, you will learn your error, young man, and, I trust, will not disregard the natural ties of country and kindred.”

Lionel would have spoken in reply, but the rapid steps of Ralph rendered his wishes vain; for, before he had time for utterance, his emaciated form was seen gliding, like an immaterial being, through the sheets of driving rain, and

was soon lost to the eye, as it vanished in the dim shades of night, followed by the more substantial frame of the idiot.

CHAPTER VII.

“Sergeant, you shall. Thus are poor servitors
When others sleep upon their quiet beds,
Constrained to watch in darkness, rain and cold.”
—*King Henry VI.*

Two or three days of fine, balmy, spring weather succeeded to the storm, during which Lionel saw no more of his aged fellow-voyager. Job, however, attached himself to the British soldier with a confiding helplessness that touched the heart of his young protector, who gathered from the circumstances a just opinion of the nature of the abuses that the unfortunate changeling was frequently compelled to endure from the brutal soldiery. Meriton performed the functions of master of the wardrobe to the lad, by Lionel's express commands, with evident disgust, but with manifest advantage to the external appearance, if with no very sensible evidence of additional comfort to his charge. During this short period, the slight impression made on Lionel by the scene related in the preceding chapter, faded before the cheerful changes of the season, and the increasing interest which he felt in the society of his youthful kinswomen. Polwarth relieved him from all cares of a domestic nature, and the peculiar shade of sadness, which at times had been so very perceptible in his countenance, was changed to a look of a more brightening and cheerful character. Polwarth and Lionel had found an officer, who had formerly served in the same regiment with them in the British Islands, in command of a company of grenadiers, which formed part of the garrison of Boston. This gentleman, an Irishman, of the name of M'Fuse, was qualified to do great honor to the culinary skill of the officer of light-infantry, by virtue of a keen natural gusto for whatever possessed the inherent properties of a savory taste, though utterly destitute of any of that remarkable scientific knowledge, which might be said to distinguish the other in the art. He was, in consequence of this double claim on the notice of Lionel, a frequent guest at the nightly banquets prepared by Polwarth. Ac-

cordingly, we find him, on the evening of the third day in the week, seated with his two friends, around a board plentifully garnished by the care of that gentleman, on the preparations for which more than usual skill had been exerted, if the repeated declarations of the disciple of Helio-gabalus, to that effect, were entitled to any ordinary credit.

"In short, Major Lincoln," said Polwarth, in continuance of his favorite theme, while seated before the table, "a man may live any where, provided he possesses food—in England, or out of England, it matters not. Raiment may be necessary to appearance, but food is the only indispensable that nature has imposed on the animal world, and, in my opinion, there is a sort of obligation on every man to be satisfied, who has wherewithal to appease the cravings of his appetite.—Captain M'Fuse, I will thank you to cut that sirloin with the grain."

"What matters it, Polly," said the captain of grenadiers, with a slight Irish accent, and with the humor of his countrymen strongly depicted in his fine, open, manly features, "which way a bit of meat is divided, so there be enough to allay the cravings of the appetite, you will remember!"

"It is a collateral assistance to nature that should never be neglected," returned Polwarth, whose gravity and seriousness at his banquets were not easily disturbed; "it facilitates mastication and aids digestion, two considerations of great importance to military men, sir, who have frequently such little time for the former, and no rest after their meals to complete the latter."

"He reasons like an army contractor, who wishes to make one ration do the work of two, when transportation is high," said M'Fuse, winking to Lionel. "According to your principles, then, Polly, a potato is your true campaigner, for that is a creature you may cut any way without disturbing the grain, provided the article be a little m'aly."

"Pardon me, Captain M'Fuse," said Polwarth, "a potato should be broken, and not cut at all—there is no vegetable more used, and less understood than the potato."

"And is it you, Pater Polwarth, of Nesbitt's light-infantry," interrupted the grenadier, laying down his knife and fork with an air of infinite humor, "that will tell Dennis M'Fuse how to carve a potato! I will yield to the right of an Englishman over the chivalry of an ox, your sirloins, and your lady-rumps, if you please, but in my own country,

one end of every farm is a bog, and the other a potato-field—'tis an Irishman's patrimony that you are making so free with, sir !”

“The possession of a thing, and the knowledge how to use it, are two very different properties——”

“Give me the property of possession, then,” again interrupted the ardent grenadier, “especially when a morsel of the green island is in dispute ; and trust an old soldier of the Royal Irish to carve his own enjoyments. Now I'll wager a month's pay, and that to me is as much as if the major should say, Done for a thousand, that you can't tell how many dishes can be made, and are made every day in Ireland, out of so simple a thing as a potato.”

“You roast and boil ; and use them in stuffing tame birds, sometimes, and——”

“All old woman's cookery !” interrupted M'Fuse, with an affectation of great contempt in his manner.—“Now, sir, we have them with butter, and without butter—that counts two ; then we have the fruit p'aled ; and——”

“Impaled,” said Lionel, laughing. “I believe this nice controversy must be referred to Job, who is amusing himself in the corner there, I see, with the very subject of the dispute transfixed on his fork in the latter condition.”

“Or suppose, rather,” said M'Fuse, “as 'it is a matter to exercise the judgment of Solomon, we make a potato umpire of master Seth Sage, yonder, who should have some of the wisdom of the royal Jew, by the sagacity of his countenance as well as of his name.”

“Don't you call Seth r'yal,” said Job, suspending his occupation on the vegetable. “The king is r'yal and fla'nty, but neighbor Sage lets Job come in and eat, like a Christian.”

“That lad there is not altogether without reason, Major Lincoln,” said Polwarth ; “on the contrary, he discovers an instinctive knowledge of good from evil, by favoring us with his company at the hour of meals.”

“The poor fellow finds but little at home to tempt him to remain there, I fear,” said Lionel ; “and as he was one of the first acquaintances I made on returning to my native land, I have desired Mr. Sage to admit him at all proper hours ; and especially, Polwarth, at those times when he can have an opportunity of doing homage to your skill.”

“I am glad to see him,” said Polwarth ; “for I love an uninstructed palate, as much as I admire naiveté in a woman.—Be so good as to favor me with a cut from the

breast of that wild goose, M'Fuse—not quite so far forward, if you please; your migratory birds are apt to be tough about the wing—but simplicity in eating is, after all, the great secret of life; that and a sufficiency of food.”

“You may be right this time,” replied the grenadier, laughing; “for this fellow made one of the flankers of the flock, and did double duty in wheeling, I believe, or I have got him against the grain too! But, Polly, you have not told us how you improve in your light infantry exercises of late.”

By this time Polwarth had made such progress in the essential part of his meal as to have recovered in some measure his usual tone of good-nature, and he answered with less gravity—

“If Gage does not work a reformation in our habits, he will fag us all to death. I suppose you know, Leo, that all the flank companies are relieved from the guards to learn a new species of exercise. They call it relieving us, but the only relief I find in the matter, is when we lie down to fire—there is a luxurious moment or two then, I must confess!”

“I have known the fact, any time these ten days, by your moanings,” returned Lionel; “but what do you argue from this particular exercise, Captain-M'Fuse? Does Gage contemplate more than the customary drills?”

“You question me now, sir, on a matter in which I am uninstructed,” said the grenadier; “I am a soldier, and obey my orders, without pretending to inquire into their objects or merits; all I know is, that both grenadiers and light-infantry are taken from the guards; and that we travel over a good deal of solid earth each day, in the way of marching and counter-marching, to the manifest discomfiture and reduction of Polly, there, who loses flesh as fast as he gains ground.”

“Do you think so, Mac?” cried the delighted captain of light-infantry; “then I have not all the detestable motion in vain. They have given us little Harry Skip as a drill officer, who, I believe, has the most restless foot of any man in his Majesty's service. Do you join with me in opinion, master Sage? you seem to meditate on the subject as if it had some secret charm.”

The individual to whom Polwarth addressed this question, and who has been already named, was standing with a plate in his hand, in an attitude that bespoke close attention, with a sudden and deep interest in the discourse,

though his eyes were bent on the floor, and his face was averted as if, while listening earnestly, he had a particular desire to be unnoticed. He was the owner of the house in which Lionel had taken his quarters. His family had been some time before removed into the country, under the pretence of his inability to maintain them in a place destitute of business and resources, like Boston; but he remained himself, for the double purpose of protecting his property and serving his guests. This man partook, in no small degree, of the qualities, both of person and mind, which distinguish a large class among his countrymen. In the former, he was rather over than under the middle stature; was thin, angular, and awkward, but possessing an unusual proportion of sinew and bone. His eyes were small, black, and scintillating, and it was not easy to fancy that the intelligence they manifested was unmingled with a large proportion of shrewd cunning. The rest of his countenance was meagre, sallow, and rigidly demure. Thus called upon, on a sudden, by Polwarth for an opinion, Seth answered, with the cautious reserve with which he invariably delivered himself—

“The adjutant is an uneasy man; but that, I suppose, is so much the better for a light-infantry officer. Captain Polwarth must find it considerable jading to keep the step, now the general has ordered these new doings with the soldiers.”

“And what may be your opinion of these doings, as you call them, Mr. Sage?” asked M’Fuse; “you, who are a man of observation, should understand your countrymen; will they fight?”

“A rat will fight if the cats pen him,” said Seth, without raising his eyes from his occupation.

“But do the Americans conceive themselves to be penned?”

“Why, that is pretty much as people think, captain; the country was in great touse about the stamps and the tea, but I always said such folks as didn’t give their notes-of-hand, and had no great relish for anything more than country food, wouldn’t find themselves cramped by the laws, after all.”

“Then you see no great oppression in being asked to pay your bit of a tax, master Sage,” cried the grenadier, “to maintain such a worthy fellow as myself in a decent equipage to fight your battles.”

“Why, as to that, captain, I suppose we can do pretty

much the whole of our own fighting, when occasion calls ; though I don't think there is much stomach for such doings among the people, without need."

"But what do you think the 'Committee of Safety,' and your 'Sons of Liberty,' as they call themselves, really mean, by their parades of 'minute-men,' their gathering of provisions, carrying off the cannon, and such other formidable and appalling preparations—ha! honest Seth? do they think to frighten British soldiers with the roll of a drum, or are they amusing themselves, like boys in the holidays, with playing war?"

"I should conclude," said Seth, with undisturbed gravity and caution, "that the people are pretty much engaged, and in earnest."

"To do what?" demanded the Irishman; "to forge their own chains, that we may fetter them in truth?"

"Why, seeing that they have burnt the stamps, and thrown the tea into the harbor," returned Seth, "and, since that, have taken the management into their own hands, I should rather conclude that they have pretty much determined to do what they think best."

Lionel and Polwarth laughed aloud, and the former observed—

"You appear not to come to conclusions with our host, Captain M'Fuse, notwithstanding so much is determined. Is it well understood, Mr. Sage, that large reinforcements are coming to the colonies, and to Boston in particular?"

"Why, yes," returned Seth; "it seems to be pretty generally contemplated on."

"And what is the result of these contemplations?"

Seth paused a moment, as if uncertain whether he was master of the other's meaning, before he replied—

"Why, as the country is considerably engaged in the business, there are some who think, if the ministers don't open the port, that it will be done without much further words by the people."

"Do you know," said Lionel, gravely, "that such an attempt would lead directly to a civil war?"

"I suppose it is safe to calculate that such doings would bring on disturbances," returned his phlegmatic host.

"And you speak of it, sir, as a thing not to be deprecated, or averted by every possible means in the power of the nation!"

"If the port is opened, and the right to tax given up,"

said Seth, calmly, "I can find a man in Boston, who'll engage to let them draw all the blood that will be spilt, from his own veins, for nothing."

"And who may that redoubtable individual be, Master Sage?" cried M'Fuse; "your own plethoric person?—How now, Doyle, to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"

This sudden question was put by the captain of grenadiers to the orderly of his own company, who at that instant filled the door of the apartment with his huge frame, in the attitude of military respect, as if about to address his officer.

"Orders have come down, sir, to parade the men at half an hour after tattoo, and to be in readiness for active service."

The three gentlemen rose together from their chairs at this intelligence, while M'Fuse exclaimed—"A night march! Pooh! We are to be sent back to garrison-duty I suppose; the companies in the line grow sleepy, and wish a relief—Gage might have taken a more suitable time, than to put gentlemen on their march so soon after such a feast as this of yours, Polly."

"There is some deeper meaning to so extraordinary an order," interrupted Lionel; "there goes the tap of the tattoo, this instant! Are no other troops but your company ordered to parade?"

"The whole battalion is under the same orders, your honor, and so is the battalion of light-infantry; I was commanded to report it so to Captain Polwarth, if I saw him."

"This bears some meaning, gentlemen," said Lionel, "and it is necessary to be looked to. If either corps leaves the town to-night, I will march with it as a volunteer; for it is my business, just now, to examine into the state of the country."

"That we shall march to-night, is sure, your honor," added the sergeant, with the confidence of an old soldier; "but how far, or on what road, is known only to the officers of the staff; though the men think we are to go out by the colleges."

"And what has put so learned an opinion in their silly heads?" demanded his captain.

"One of the men who has been on leave, has just got in, and reports that a squad of gentlemen from the army dined near them, your honor, and that as night set in they

mounted and began to patrol the roads in that direction. He was met and questioned by four of them as he crossed the flats."

"All this confirms my conjectures," cried Lionel—"there is a man who might now prove of important service—Job—where is the simpleton, Meriton?"

"He was called out, sir, a minute since, and has left the house."

"Then send in Mr. Sage," continued the young man, musing as he spoke. A moment after it was reported to him that Seth had strangely disappeared also.

"Curiosity has led him to the barracks," said Lionel, "where duty calls you, gentlemen. I will despatch a little business, and join you there in an hour; you cannot march short of that time."

The bustle of a general departure succeeded. Lionel threw his cloak into the arms of Meriton, to whom he delivered his orders, took his arms, and, making his apologies to his guests, he left the house with the manner of one who saw a pressing necessity to be prompt. M'Fuse proceeded to equip himself with the deliberation of a soldier who was too much practised to be easily disconcerted. Notwithstanding his great deliberation, the delay of Polwarth, however, eventually vanquished the patience of the grenadier, who exclaimed, on hearing the other repeat, for the fourth time, an order concerning the preservation of certain viands, to which he appeared to cling in spirit, after a carnal separation was directed by fortune.

"Poh! poh! man," exclaimed the Irishman, "why will you bother yourself on the eve of a march, with such epicurean propensities! It's the soldier who should show your hermits and anchorites an example of mortification; besides, Polly, this affectation of care and provision is the less excusable in yourself,—you, who have been well aware that we were to march on a secret expedition this very night on which you seem so much troubled."

"I!" exclaimed Polwarth; "as I hope to eat another meal, I am as ignorant as the meanest corporal in the army of the whole transaction—why do you suspect otherwise?"

"Trifles tell the old campaigner when and where the blow is to be struck," returned M'Fuse, coolly drawing his military overcoat tighter to his large frame; "have I not, with my own eyes, seen you, within the hour, provision a certain captain of light-infantry after a very heavy fashion;

Damn it, man, do you think I have served these five-and-twenty years, and do not know that when a garrison begins to fill its granaries, it expects a siege?"

"I have paid no more than a suitable compliment to the entertainment of Major Lincoln," returned Polwarth; "but so far from having had any very extraordinary appetite, I have not found myself in a condition to do all the justice I could wish to several of the dishes.—Mr. Meriton, I will thank you to have the remainder of that bird sent down to the barracks, where my man will receive it; and, as it may be a long march, and a hungry one, add the tongue, and a fowl, and some of the ragout; we can warm it up at any farm-house—we'll take the piece of beef, Mac—Leo has a particular taste for a cold cut; and you might put up the ham, also; it will keep better than anything else, if we should be out long—and—and—I believe that will do, Meriton."

"I am as much rejoiced to hear it as I should be to hear a proclamation of war read at Charing-Cross," cried M'Fuse—"you should have been a commissary, Polly—nature meant you for an army sutler!"

"Laugh as you will, Mac," returned the good-humored Polwarth; "I shall hear your thanks when we halt for breakfast; but I attend you now."

As they left the house, he continued, "I hope Gage means no more than to push us a little in advance with a view to protect the foragers and the supplies of the army—such a situation would have very pretty advantages; for a system might be established that would give the mess of the light corps the choice of the whole market."

"'Tis a mighty preparation about some old iron gun, which would cost a man his life to put a match to," returned M'Fuse, cavalierly; "for my part, Captain Polwarth, if we are to fight these colonists at all, I would do the thing like a man, and allow the lads to gather together a suitable arsenal, that when we come to blows, it may be a military affair—as it now stands, I should be ashamed, as I am a soldier and an Irishman, to bid my fellows pull a trigger, or make a charge, on a set of peasants, whose fire-arms look more like rusty water-pipes than muskets, and who have half a dozen cannon with touch-holes that a man may put his head in, with muzzles just large enough to throw marbles."

"I don't know, Mac," said Polwarth, while they diligently pursued their way toward the quarters of their

men ; "even a marble may destroy a man's appetite for his dinner ; and the countrymen possess a great advantage over us in commanding the supplies—the difference in equipments would not more than balance the odds."

"I wish to disturb no gentleman's opinion on matters of military discretion, Captain Polwarth," said the grenadier, with an air of high martial pride ; "but I take it there exists a material difference between a soldier and a butcher, though killing be a business common to both—I repeat, sir, I hope that this secret expedition is for a more worthy object than to deprive those poor devils, with whom we are about to fight, of the means of making a good battle ; and I add, sir, that such is sound military doctrine, without regarding who may choose to controvert it."

"Your sentiments are generous and manly, Mac ; but, after all, there is both a physical and moral obligation on every man to eat ; and if starvation be the consequence of permitting your enemies to bear arms, it becomes a solemn duty to deprive them of their weapons—no—no—I will support Gage in such a measure, at present, as highly military."

"And he is much obliged to you, sir, for your support," returned the other—"I apprehend, Captain Polwarth, whenever the Lieutenant-General Gage finds it necessary to lean on any one for extraordinary assistance, he will remember that there is a regiment called the Royal Irish in the country, and that he is not entirely ignorant of the qualities of the people of his own nation.—You have done well, Captain Polwarth, to choose the light-infantry service—they are a set of foragers, and can help themselves, but the grenadiers, thank God, love to encounter men, and not cattle, in the field."

How long the good-nature of Polwarth would have endured the increasing taunts of the Irishman, who was exasperating himself, gradually, by his own arguments, there is no possibility of determining ; for their arrival at the barracks put an end to the controversy and to the feelings it was beginning to engender.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Preserve thy sighs, unthrifty girl !
To purify the air ;
Thy tears to thread, instead of pearl,
On bracelets of thy hair.”—DAVENANT.

LIONEL might have blushed to acknowledge the secret and inexplicable influence which his unknown and mysterious friend, Ralph, had obtained over his feelings, but which induced him, on leaving his own quarters thus hastily, to take his way into the lower parts of the town, in quest of the residence of Abigail Pray. He had not visited the sombre tenement of this woman since the night of his arrival, but its proximity to the well-known town-hall, as well as the quaint architecture of the building itself, had frequently brought its exterior under his observation, in the course of his rambles through the place of his nativity. A guide being, consequently, unnecessary, he took the most direct and frequented route to the dock square. When Lionel issued into the street, he found a deep darkness already enveloping the peninsula of Boston, as if nature had lent herself to the secret designs of the British commandant. The fine strain of a shrill fife was playing among the naked hills of the place, accompanied by the occasional and measured taps of the sullen drum ; and, at moments, the full, rich notes of the horns would rise from the common, and, borne on the night-air, sweep along the narrow streets, causing the nerves of the excited young soldier to thrill with a stern pleasure, as he stepped proudly along. The practised ear, however, detected no other sounds in the music than the usual nightly signal of rest ; and when the last melting strains of the horns seemed to be lost in the clouds, a stillness fell upon the town, like the deep and slumbering quiet of midnight. He paused a moment before the gates of Province-House, and, after examining, with an attentive eye, the windows of the building, he spoke to the grenadier, who had stopped in his short walk, to note the curious stranger.

“You should have company within, sentinel,” he said, “by the brilliant light from those windows.”

The rattling of Lionel’s side-arms, as he pointed with his hand in the direction of the illuminated apartment, taught

the soldier that he was addressed by his superior, and he answered respectfully—

“It does not become one such as I to pretend to know much of what his betters do, your honor; but I stood before the quarters of General Wolfe the very night we went up to the Plains of Abram; and I think an old soldier can tell when a movement is at hand, without asking his superiors any impertinent questions.”

“I suppose, from your remark, the general holds a council to-night?” said Lionel.

“No one has gone in, sir, since I have been posted,” returned the sentinel, “but the lieutenant-colonel of the 10th, that great Northumbrian lord, and the old major of marines; a great war-dog is that old man, your honor, and it is not often he comes to Province-House for nothing.”

“A good-night to you, my old comrade,” said Lionel, walking away; “’tis probably some consultation concerning the new exercises that you practise.”

The grenadier shook his head, as if unconcerned, and resumed his march with his customary steadiness. A very few minutes now brought Lionel before the low door of Abigail Pray, where he again stopped, struck with the contrast between the gloomy, dark, and unguarded threshold over which he was about to pass, and the gay portal he had just left. Urged, however, by his feelings, the young man paused but a moment before he tapped lightly for admission. After repeating his summons, and hearing no reply, he lifted the latch, and entered the building without further ceremony. The large and vacant apartment, in which he found himself, was silent and dreary as the still streets he had quitted. Groping his way toward the little room in the tower, where he had met the mother of Job, as before related, Lionel found that apartment also tenantless, and dark. He was turning, in disappointment, to quit the place, when a feeble ray fell from the loft of the building, and settled on the foot of a rude ladder which formed the means of communication with its upper apartments. Hesitating a single moment now to decide, he then yielded to his anxiety, and ascended to the floor above, with steps as light as extreme caution could render them. Like the basement, the building was subdivided here, into a large, open ware-room, and a small, rudely-finished apartment in each of its towers. Following the rays from a candle, he stood on the threshold of one of these little rooms, in which he found the individual of whom he was

in quest. The old man was seated on the only broken chair which the loft contained, and before him, on the simple bundle of straw which would seem, by the garments thrown loosely over the pile, to be intended as his place of rest, lay a large map, spread for inspection, which his glazed and sunken eyes appeared to be intently engaged in marking. Lionel hesitated again, while he regarded the white hairs which fell across the temples of the stranger, as he bowed his head in his employment, imparting a wild and melancholy expression to his remarkable countenance, and seeming to hallow their possessor by the air of great age and attendant care that they imparted.

"I have come to seek you," the young man at length said, "since you no longer deem me worthy of your care."

"You come too late," returned Ralph, without betraying the least emotion at the suddenness of the interruption, or even raising his eyes from the map he studied so intently; "too late at least to avert calamity, if not to learn wisdom from its lessons."

"You know, then, of the secret movements of the night?"

"Old age, like mine, seldom sleeps," returned Ralph, looking for the first time at his visitor; "for the eternal night of death promises a speedy repose. I, too, served an apprenticeship in my youth to your trade of blood."

"Your watchfulness and experience have then detected the signs of preparation in the garrison? Have they also discovered the objects, and probable consequences of the enterprise?"

"Both; Gage weakly thinks to crush the germ of liberty, which has already quickened in the land, by lopping its feeble branches, when it is rooted in the hearts of the people. He thinks that bold thoughts can be humbled by the destruction of magazines."

"It is then only a measure of precaution that he is about to take?"

The old man shook his head mournfully as he answered—

"It will prove a measure of blood."

"I intend to accompany the detachment into the country," said Lionel—"it will probably take post at some little distance in the interior, and it will afford me a fitting opportunity to make those inquiries which you know are so near my heart, and in which you have promised to

assist—it is to consult on the means, that I have now sought you.”

The countenance of the stranger seemed to lose its character of melancholy reflection, as Lionel spoke, and his eyes moved, vacant and unmeaning, over the naked rafters above him, passing in their wanderings across the surface of the unheeded map again, until they fell full upon the face of the astonished youth, where they remained settled for more than a minute, fixed in the glazed, riveted look of death. The lips of Lionel had already opened in anxious inquiry, when the expression of life shot again into the features of Ralph, with the suddenness, and with an appearance of the physical reality with which light flashes from the sun when emerging from a cloud.

“You are ill!” Lionel exclaimed.

“Leave me,” said the old man, “leave me.”

“Surely not at such a moment, and alone.”

“I bid you leave me—we shall meet, as you desire, in the country.”

“You would then have me accompany the troops, and expect your coming?”

“Both.”

“Pardon me,” said Lionel, dropping his eyes in embarrassment, and speaking with hesitation, “but your present abode, and the appearance of your attire, is an evidence that old age has come upon you when you are not altogether prepared to meet its sufferings.”

“You would offer me money?”

“By accepting it, I shall become the obliged party.”

“When my wants exceed my means, young man, your offer shall be remembered. Go, now; there is no time for delay.”

“But I would not leave you alone; the woman, the termagant, is better than none!”

“She is absent.”

“And the boy—the changeling has the feelings of humanity, and would aid you in an extremity.”

“He is better employed than in propping the steps of a useless old man.—Go, then, I entreat—I command, sir, that you leave me.”

The firm, if not haughty manner, in which the other repeated his desire, taught Lionel that he had nothing more to expect at present, and he obeyed reluctantly, by slowly leaving the apartment; and as soon as he had descended the ladder, he began to retrace his steps toward

his own quarters. In crossing the light drawbridge thrown over the narrow dock, already mentioned, his contemplations were first disturbed by the sounds of voices, at no great distance, apparently conversing in tones that were not intended to be heard by every ear. It was a moment when each unusual incident was likely to induce inquiry, and Lionel stopped to examine two men, who, at a little distance, held their secret and suppressed communications. He had, however, paused but an instant, when the whisperers separated; one walking leisurely up the centre of the square, entering under one of the arches of the market-place, and the other coming directly across the bridge on which he himself was standing.

"What, Job, do I find you here, whispering and plotting in the Dock-square!" exclaimed Lionel; "what secrets can you have, that require the cover of night?"

"Job lives there, in the old ware'us'," said the lad sullenly—"Nab has plenty of house-room, now the king won't let the people bring in their goods."

"But whither are you going? into the water? surely the road to your bed cannot be through the town dock."

"Nab wants fish to eat, as well as a ruff to keep off the rain," said Job, dropping lightly from the bridge into a small canoe, which was fastened to one of its posts, "and now the king has closed the harbor, the fish have to come up in the dark; for come they will; Boston fish an't to be shut out by acts of Parliament!"

"Poor lad!" exclaimed Lionel, "return to your home and your bed; here is money to buy food for your mother, if she suffers—you will draw a shot from some of the sentinels by going about the harbor thus at night."

"Job can see a ship farther than a ship can see Job," returned the other; "and if they should kill Job, they needn't think to shoot a Boston boy without some stir."

Further dialogue was precluded; the canoe gliding along the outer dock into the harbor, with a stillness and swiftness that showed the idiot was not ignorant of the business which he had undertaken. Lionel resumed his walk, and was passing the head of the square, when he encountered, face to face, under the light of a lamp, the man whose figure he had seen but a minute before to issue from beneath the town-hall. A mutual desire to ascertain the identity of each other drew them together.

"We meet again, Major Lincoln!" said the interesting stranger Lionel remembered to have seen at the political

meeting. "Our interviews appear ordained to occur in secret places."

"And Job Pray would seem to be the presiding spirit," returned the young soldier. "You parted from him but now?"

"I trust, sir," said the stranger gravely, "that this is not a land, nor have we fallen on times, when and where an honest man dare not say that he has spoken to whom he pleases."

"Certainly, sir, it is not for me to prohibit the intercourse," returned Lionel. "You spoke of our fathers; mine is well known to you, it would seem, though to me you are a stranger."

"And may be so yet a little longer," said the other, "though I think the time is at hand when men will be known in their true characters; until then, Major Lincoln, I bid you adieu."

Without waiting for any reply, the stranger took a different direction from that which Lionel was pursuing, and walked away with the swiftness of one who was pressed with urgent business. Lionel soon ascended into the upper part of the town, with the intention of going into Tremont Street, to communicate his design to accompany the expedition. It was now apparent to the young man, that a rumor of the contemplated movement of the troops was spreading secretly, but swiftly, among the people. He passed several groups of earnest and excited townsmen, conferring together at the corners of the streets, from some of whom he overheard the startling intelligence that the neck, the only approach to the place by land, was closed by a line of sentinels; and that guard-boats from the vessels of war were encircling the peninsula in a manner to intercept the communication with the adjacent country. Still no indications of a military alarm could be discovered, though, at times, a stifled hum, like the notes of busy preparation, was borne along by the damp breezes of the night, and mingled with those sounds of a spring evening, which increased as he approached the skirts of the dwellings. In Tremont Street Lionel found no appearance of that excitement, which was spreading so rapidly in the old and lower parts of the town. He passed into his own room without meeting any of the family, and having completed his brief arrangements, he was descending to inquire for his kinswoman, when the voice of Mrs. Lechmere, proceeding from a small apartment, appropriated to her own use,

arrested his steps. Anxious to take leave in person, he approached the half-open door, and would have asked permission to enter, had not his eye rested on the person of Abigail Pray, who was in earnest conference with the mistress of the mansion.

"A man aged, and poor, say you?" observed Mrs. Lechmere, at that instant.

"And one that seems to know all," interrupted Abigail, glancing her eyes about with the expression of superstitious terror.

"All!" echoed Mrs. Lechmere, her lip trembling more with apprehension than age; "and he arrived with Major Lincoln, say you?"

"In the same ship; and it seems that heaven has ordained that he shall dwell with me in my poverty, as a punishment for my great sins!"

"But why do you tolerate his presence, if it be irksome," said Mrs. Lechmere; "you are at least the mistress of your own dwelling."

"It has pleased God that my home shall be the home of any who are so miserable as to need one. He has the same right to live in the warehouse that I have."

"You have the rights of a woman, and of first possession," said Mrs. Lechmere, with that unyielding severity of manner, that Lionel had often observed before; "I would turn him into the street, like a dog."

"Into the street!" repeated Abigail, again looking about her in secret terror; "speak lower, Madam Lechmere, for the love of heaven—I dare not even look at him—he reminds me of all I have ever known, and of all the evil I have ever done, by his scorching eye—and yet I cannot tell why—and then Job worships him as a god, and if I should offend him, he could easily worm from the child all that you and I wish so much——"

"How!" exclaimed Mrs. Lechmere, in a voice husky with horror, "have you been so base as to make a confidant of that fool?"

"That fool is the child of my bosom," said Abigail, raising her hands, as if imploring pardon for the indiscretion.—"Ah! Madam Lechmere, you, who are rich, and great, and happy, and have such a sweet and sensible grandchild, cannot know how to love one like Job; but when the heart is loaded and heavy, it throws its burden on any that will bear it; and Job is my child, though he is but little better than an idiot!"

It was by no trifling exertion of his breeding that Lionel was enabled to profit by the inability of Mrs. Lechmere to reply, and to turn away from the spot, and cease to listen to a conversation that was not intended for his ear. He reached the parlor, and threw himself on one of its settees, before he was conscious that he was no longer alone or unobserved.

"What! Major Lincoln returned from his revels thus early, and armed like a bandit, to his teeth!" exclaimed the playful voice of Cecil Dynevor, who, unheeded, was in possession of the opposite seat, when he entered the room.

Lionel started, and rubbed his forehead, like a man awaking from a dream, as he answered—

"Yes, a bandit, or any other opprobrious name you please; I deserve them all."

"Surely," said Cecil, turning pale, "none other dare use such language of Major Lincoln, and he does it unjustly!"

"What foolish nonsense have I uttered, Miss Dynevor?" cried Lionel, recovering his recollection; "I was lost in thought, and heard your language without comprehending its meaning."

"Still you are armed; a sword is not a usual instrument at your side, and now you bear even pistols!"

"Yes," returned the young soldier, laying aside his dangerous implements; "yes, I am about to march as a volunteer, with a party that go into the country to-night, and I take these because I would affect something very warlike, though you well know how peaceably I am disposed."

"March into the country—and in the dead of night!" said Cecil, catching her breath, and turning pale—"And does Lionel Lincoln volunteer on such a duty?"

"I volunteer to perform no other duty than to be a witness of whatever may occur—you are not more ignorant yourself of the nature of the expedition than I am at this moment."

"Then remain where you are," said Cecil firmly, "and enlist not in an enterprise that may be unholy in its purposes and disgraceful in its results."

"Of the former I am innocent, whatever they may be, nor will they be affected by my presence or absence. There is little danger of disgrace in accompanying the grenadiers and light-infantry of this army, Miss Dynevor, though it should be against treble their numbers of chosen troops."

"Then it would seem," said Agnes Danforth, speaking as she entered the room, "that our friend Mercury, that feather of a man, Captain Polwarth, is to be one of these night depredators! heaven shield the hen-roosts!"

"You have then heard the intelligence, Agnes?"

"I have heard that men are arming, and that boats are rowing round the town in all directions, and that it is forbidden to enter or quit Boston, as we were wont to do, Cecil, at such hours, and in such fashion as suited us plain Americans," said Agnes, endeavoring to conceal her deep vexation in affected irony—"God only can tell in what all these oppressive measures will end."

"If you go only as a curious spectator of the depredations of the troops," continued Cecil, "are you not wrong to lend them even the sanction of your name?"

"I have yet to learn that there will be depredations."

"You forget, Cecil," interrupted Agnes Danforth, scornfully, "that Major Lincoln did not arrive until after the renowned march from Roxbury to Dorchester! Then the troops gathered their laurels under the face of the sun; but it is easy to conceive how much more glorious their achievements will become when darkness shall conceal their blushes!"

The blood rushed across the fine features of Lionel, but he laughed as he arose to depart, saying—

"You compel me to beat the retreat, my spirited coz. If I have my usual fortune in this forage, your larder, however, shall be the better for it. I kiss my hand to you, for it would be necessary to lay aside the scarlet, to dare to approach with a more peaceable offering. But here I may make an approach to something like amity."

He took the hand of Cecil, who frankly met his offer, and insensibly suffered herself to be led to the door of the building while he continued speaking.

"I would, Lincoln, that you were not to go," she said, when they stopped on the threshold—"it is not required of you as a soldier; and as a man your own feelings should teach you to be tender of your countrymen."

"It is as a man that I go, Cecil," he answered; "I have motives that you cannot suspect."

"And is your absence to be long?"

"If not for days, my object will be unaccomplished;" but he added, pressing her hand gently, "you cannot doubt my willingness to return when occasion may offer."

"Go, then," said Cecil, hastily, and perhaps uncon-

sciously extricating herself—"go, if you have secret reasons for your conduct; but remember that the acts of every officer of your rank are keenly noted."

"Do you then distrust me, Cecil?"

"No—no—I distrust no one, Major Lincoln—go—go—and—and—we shall see you, Lionel, the instant you return."

He had not time to reply, for she glided into the building so rapidly as to give the young man an opportunity only to observe, that, instead of rejoining her cousin, her light form passed up the great stairs with the swiftness and grace of a fairy.

CHAPTER IX.

"Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still, *They come*."—*Macbeth*.

LIONEL had walked from the dwelling of Mrs. Lechmere to the foot of Beacon Hill, and had even toiled up some part of the steep ascent, before he recollected why he was thus wandering by himself at that unusual hour. Hearing, however, no sounds that denoted an immediate movement of the troops, he then yielded, unconsciously, to the nature of his sensations, which just at that moment rendered his feelings jealous of communication with others, and continued to ascend until he gained the summit of the eminence. From this elevated stand he paused to contemplate the scene which lay in the obscurity of night at his feet, while his thoughts returned from the flattering anticipations in which he had been indulging, to consider the more pressing business of the hour. There arose from the town itself a distant buzzing, like the hum of suppressed agitation, and lights were seen to glide along the streets, or flit across the windows, in a manner which denoted that a knowledge of the expedition had become general within its dwellings. Lionel turned his head toward the common, and listened long and anxiously, but in vain, to detect a single sound that could betray any unusual stir among the soldiery. Toward the interior, the darkness of night had fallen heavily, dimming the amphitheatre of hills that encircled the place, and enshrouding the vales and lowlands between them and the water with an impenetrable veil of

gloom. There were moments, indeed, when he imagined he overheard some indications among the people of the opposite shore, that they were apprised of the impending descent ; but on listening more attentively, the utmost of which his ear could assure him, was the faint lowing of cattle from the meadows, or the splash of oars from a line of boats, which, by stretching far along the shores, told both the nature and the extent of the watchfulness that was deemed necessary for the occasion.

While Lionel stood thus, on the margin of the little platform of earth, that had been formed by levelling the apex of the natural cone, musing on the probable results of the measure his superiors had been resolving to undertake, a dim light shed itself along the grass, and glancing upward, danced upon the beacon with strong and playful rays.

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed a man, springing from his place of concealment at the foot of the post, and encountering him face to face, "do you dare to fire the beacon?"

"I would answer, by asking how you dare to apply so rude an epithet to me, did I not see the cause of your error," said Lionel. "The light is from yonder moon, which is just emerging from the ocean."

"Ah! I see my error," returned his rough assailant.—"By heavens, I would have sworn at first, 'twas the beacon."

"You must then believe in the traditional witchcraft of this country ; for nothing short of necromancy could have enabled me to light those combustibles at this distance."

"I don't know ; 'tis a strange people we have got amongst—they stole the cannon from the gun-house here, a short time since, when I would have said the thing was impossible. It was before your arrival, sir ; for I now believe I address myself to Major Lincoln, of the 47th."

"You are nearer the truth, this time, than in your first conjecture as to my character," said Lionel ; "but have I met one of the gentlemen of our mess?"

The stranger now explained that he was a subaltern in a different regiment, but that he well knew the person of the other. He added that he had been ordered to watch on the hill to prevent any of the inhabitants lighting the beacon, or making any other signal which might convey into the country a knowledge of the contemplated inroad.

"This matter wears a more serious aspect than I had supposed," returned Lionel, when the young man had ended his apologies and explanation ; "the commander-in-

chief must intend more than we are aware of, by employing officers in this manner, to do the duties of privates."

"We poor subs know but little, and care less what he means," cried the ensign; "though I will acknowledge, that I can see no sufficient reason why British troops should put on coats of darkness to march against a parcel of guessing, canting countrymen, who would run at the sight of their uniforms under a bright sun. Had I my will, the tar above us, there, should blaze a mile high, to bring down the heroes from the Connecticut river; the dogs would cow before two full companies of the grenadiers—ha! listen, sir; there they go, now, the pride of our army! I know them by their heavy tread."

Lionel did listen attentively, and plainly distinguished the measured step of a body of disciplined men, moving rapidly across the common, as if marching toward the water-side. Hastily bidding his companion good-night, he threw himself over the brow of the hill, and taking the direction of the sounds, he arrived at the shore at the same instant with the troops. Two dark masses of human bodies were halted in order, and as Lionel skirted the columns, his experienced eye judged that the force collected before him could be but little short of a thousand men. A group of officers was clustered on the beach, and he approached it, rightly supposing that it was gathered about the leader of the party. This officer proved to be the lieutenant-colonel of the 10th, who was in close conversation with the old major of marines, alluded to by the sentinel who stood before the gates of Province-House. To the former of these the young soldier addressed himself, demanding leave to accompany the detachment as a volunteer. After a few words of explanation, his request was granted, though each forbore to touch in the slightest manner on the secret objects of the expedition.

Lionel now found his groom, who had followed the troops with his master's horses, and, after giving his orders to the man, he proceeded in quest of his friend Polwarth, whom he soon discovered, posted in all the stiffness of military exactness, at the head of the leading platoon of the column of light-infantry. As it was apparent, both from the position they occupied, as well as by the boats that had been collected at the point, that the detachment was not to leave the peninsula by its ordinary channel of communication with the country, there remained no alternative but to await patiently the order to embark. The

delay was but short, and, as the most perfect order was observed, the troops were soon seated, and the boats pulled heavily from the land, just as the rays of the moon, which had been some time playing among the hills, and gilding the spires of the town, diffused themselves softly over the bay, and lighted the busy scene, with an effect not unlike the sudden rising of the curtain at the opening of some interesting drama. Polwarth had established himself by the side of Lionel, much to the ease of his limbs, and as they moved slowly into the light, all those misgivings which had so naturally accompanied his musings on the difficulties of a partisan irruption, vanished before the loveliness of the time, and possibly before the quietude of the action.

"There are moments when I could fancy the life of a sailor," he said, leaning indolently back, and playing with one hand in the water. "This pulling about in boats is easy work, and must be capital assistance for a heavy digestion, inasmuch as it furnishes air with as little violent exercise as may be. Your marine should lead a merry life of it!"

"They are said to murmur at the clashing of their duties with those of the sea-officers," said Lionel; "and I have often heard them complain of a want of room to make use of their legs."

"Humph!" ejaculated Polwarth; "the leg is a part of a man for which I see less actual necessity than for any other portion of his frame. I often think there has been a sad mistake in the formation of the animal; as, for instance, one can be a very good waterman, as you see, without legs—a good fiddler, a first-rate tailor, a lawyer, a doctor, a parson, a very tolerable cook, and in short, anything but a dancing master. I see no use in a leg unless it be to have the gout—at any rate, a leg of twelve inches is as good as one a mile long, and the saving might be appropriated to the nobler parts of the animal; such as the brain and the stomach."

"You forget the officer of light-infantry," said Lionel, laughing.

"You might give him a couple of inches more; though, as everything in this wicked world is excellent only by comparison, it would amount to the same thing, and on my system a man would be just as fit for the light-infantry without, as with legs; and he would get rid of a good deal of troublesome manœuvring, especially of this

new exercise. It would then become a delightful service, Leo; for it may be said to monopolize all the poetry of military life, as you may see. Neither the imagination nor the body can require more than we enjoy at this moment, and of what use, I would ask, are our legs? if anything, they are incumbrances in this boat. Here we have a soft moon, and softer seats—smooth water, and a stimulating air—on one side a fine country, which, though but faintly seen, is known to be fertile and rich to abundance; and on the other a picturesque town, stored with the condiments of every climate—even those rascally privates look mellowed by the moon-beams, with their scarlet coats and glittering arms! Did you meet Miss Danforth in your visit to Tremont Street, Major Lincoln?"

"That pleasure was not denied me."

"Knew she of these martial proceedings?"

"There was something exceedingly belligerent in her humor."

"Spoke she of the light-infantry, or of any who serve in the light corps?"

"Your name was certainly mentioned," returned Lionel, a little dryly—"she intimated that the hen-roosts were in danger."

"Ah! she is a girl of a million! her very acids are sweet! the spices were not forgotten when the dough of her composition was mixed; would that she were here—five minutes of moonshine to a man in love is worth a whole summer of a broiling sun—'twould be a master-stroke to entice her into one of our picturesque marches; your partisan is the man to take everything by surprise—women and fortifications! Where now are your companies of the lines; your artillery and dragoons; your engineers and staff! night-capped and snoring to a man, while we enjoy here the very dessert of existence—I wish I could hear a nightingale!"

"You have a solitary whip-poor-will whistling his notes, as if in lamentation at our approach."

"Too dolorous, and by far too monotonous; 'tis like eating pig for a month. But why are our fifes asleep?"

"The precautions of a whole day should hardly be defeated by the tell-tale notes of our music," said Lionel; "your spirits get the better of your discretion. I should think the prospect of a fatiguing march would have lowered your vein."

"A fico for fatigue!" exclaimed Polwarth—"we only

go out to take a position at the colleges to cover our supplies—we are for school, Leo—only fancy the knapsacks of the men to be satchels,—humor my folly,—and you may believe yourself once more a boy.”

The spirits of Polwarth had indeed undergone a sudden change, when he found the sad anticipations which crossed his mind on first hearing of a night inroad, so agreeably disappointed by the comfortable situation he occupied; and he continued conversing in the manner described, until the boats reached an unfrequented point that projected a little way into that part of the bay, which washed the western side of the peninsula of Boston. Here the troops landed, and were again formed with all possible despatch. The company of Polwarth was posted, as before, at the head of the column of light-infantry; and an officer of the staff riding a short distance in front, it was directed to follow his movements. Lionel ordered his groom to take the route of the troops with the horses, and placing himself once more by the side of the captain, they proceeded at the appointed signal.

“Now for the shades of old Harvard!” said Polwarth, pointing toward the humble buildings of the university; “you shall feast this night on reason, while I will make a more sub—ha! what can that blind quarter-master mean by taking this direction! Does he not see that the meadows are half covered with water!”

“Move on, move on with the light-infantry,” cried the stern voice of the old major of marines, who rode but a short distance in their rear. “Do you falter at the sight of water!”

“We are not wharf-rats,” said Polwarth.

Lionel seized him by the arm, and before the disconcerted captain had time to recollect himself, he was borne through a wide pool of stagnant water, mid-leg deep.

“Do not let your romance cost your commission,” said the major, as Polwarth floundered out of his difficulties; “here is an incident at once for your private narrative of the campaign.”

“Ah! Leo,” said the captain, with a sort of comical sorrow, “I fear we are not to court the muses by this hallowed moon to-night!”

“You can assure yourself of that, by observing that we leave the academical roofs on our left—our leaders take the highway.”

They had by this time extricated themselves from the

meadows, and were moving on a road which led into the interior.

"You had better order up your groom, and mount, Major Lincoln," said Polwarth, sullenly; "a man need husband his strength, I see."

"'Twould be folly now; I am wet, and must walk for safety."

With the departure of Polwarth's spirits the conversation began to flag, and the gentlemen continued their march with only such occasional communications as arose from the passing incidents of their situation. It very soon became apparent, both by the direction given to the columns, as well as by the hurried steps of their guide, that the march was to be forced, as well as of some length. But as the air was getting cool, even Polwarth was not reluctant to warm his chilled blood by more than ordinary exertion. The columns opened for the sake of ease, and each man was permitted to consult his own convenience, provided he preserved his appointed situation, and kept even pace with his comrades. In this manner the detachment advanced swiftly, a general silence pervading the whole, as the spirits of the men settled into that deep sobriety which denotes much earnestness of purpose. At first, the whole country appeared buried in a general sleep; but as they proceeded, the barking of the dogs, and the tread of the soldiery, drew the inhabitants of the farm-houses to their windows, who gazed in mute wonder at the passing spectacle, across which the mellow light of the moon cast a glow of brilliancy. Lionel had turned his head from studying the surprise depicted in the faces of the members of one of these disturbed families, when the deep tones of a distant church-bell came sweeping down the valley in which they marched, ringing peal on peal, in the quick, spirit-stirring sounds of an alarm. The men raised their heads in wondering attention, as they advanced; but it was not long before the reports of fire-arms were heard echoing among the hills, and bell began to answer bell in every direction, until the sounds blended with the murmurs of the night air, or were lost in distance. The whole country was now filled with every organ of sound that the means of the people furnished, or their ingenuity could devise, to call the population to arms. Fires blazed along the heights, the bellowing of the conchs and horns mingled with the rattling of the muskets and the varied tones of the bells, while the swift clattering of

horses' hoofs began to be heard, as if their riders were dashing furiously along the flanks of the party.

"Push on, gentlemen, push on," shouted the old veteran of marines, amid the din. "The Yankees have awoken, and are stirring—we have yet a long road to journey—push on, light-infantry, the grenadiers are on your heels!"

The advance quickened their steps, and the whole body pushed for their unknown object with as much rapidity as the steadiness of military array would admit. In this manner the detachment continued to proceed for some hours, without halting, and Lionel imagined that they had advanced several leagues into the country. The sounds of the alarm had now passed away, having swept far inland, until the faintest evidence of its existence was lost to the ear, though the noise of horsemen, riding furiously along the by-ways, yet denoted that men were still hurrying past them, to the scene of the expected strife. As the deceitful light of the moon was blending with the truer colors of the day, the welcome sound of "Halt!" was passed from the rear up to the head of the column of light-infantry.

"Halt!" repeated Polwarth, with instinctive readiness, and with a voice that sent the order through the whole length of the extended line; "halt, and let the rear close. If my judgment in walking be worth so much as an anchovy, they are some miles behind us by this time! A man needs to have crossed his race with the blood of Flying Childers for this sort of work! The next command should be to break our fasts—Tom, you brought the trifles I sent you from Major Lincoln's quarters?"

"Yes, sir," returned his man; "they are on the major's horses, in the rear, as——"

"The major's horses in the rear, you ass, when food is in such request in the front! I wonder, Leo, if a mouthful couldn't be picked up in yon farm-house?"

"Pick yourself off that stone, and make the men dress; here is Pitcairn closing to the front with the whole battalion."

Lionel had hardly spoken before an order was passed to the light-infantry to look to their arms, and for the grenadiers to prime and load. The presence of the veteran who rode in front of the column, and the hurry of the moment, suppressed the complaints of Polwarth, who was in truth an excellent officer, as it respected what he himself termed the "quiescent details of service." Three or four companies of the light-corps were detached from the main

body, and formed in the open marching order of their exercise, when the old marine, placing himself at their head, gave forth the order to advance again at a quick step. The road now led into a vale, and at some distance a small hamlet of houses was dimly seen through the morning haze, clustered around one of the humble, but decent temples, so common in Massachusetts. The halt, and the brief preparations that succeeded, had excited a powerful interest in the whole of the detachment, who pushed earnestly forward, keeping on the heels of the charger of their veteran leader, as he passed over the ground at a small trot. The air partook of the scent of morning, and the eye was enabled to dwell distinctly on surrounding objects, quickening, aided by the excitement of the action, the blood of the men who had been toiling throughout the night in uncertain obscurity along an unknown, and, apparently, interminable road. Their object now seemed before them and attainable, and they pressed forward to achieve it in animated but silent earnestness. The plain architecture of the church and of its humble companions had just become distinct, when three or four armed horsemen were seen attempting to anticipate their arrival, by crossing the head of the column from a by-path.

"Come in," cried an officer of the staff in front, "come in, or quit the place."

The men turned and rode briskly off, one of their party flashing his piece in a vain attempt to give the alarm. A low mandate was now passed through the ranks to push on, and in a few moments they entered on a full view of the hamlet, the church, and the little green on which it stood. The forms of men were seen moving swiftly across the latter, as a roll of a drum broke from the spot; and there were glimpses of a small body of countrymen, drawn up in the affectation of military parade.

"Push on, light-infantry!" cried their leader, spurring his horse, and advancing with the staff at so brisk a trot, as to disappear round an angle of the church.

Lionel pressed forward with a beating heart, for a crowd of horrors rushed across his imagination at the moment, when the stern voice of the major of marines was again heard shouting—

"Disperse, ye rebels, disperse!—throw down your arms and disperse!"

These memorable words were instantly followed by the reports of pistols, and the fatal mandate of "Fire!" when

a loud shout arose from the whole body of the soldiery, who rushed upon the open green, and threw in a close discharge on all before them.

"Great God!" exclaimed Lionel, "what is it ye do? ye fire at unoffending men! is there no law but force! beat up their pieces, Polwarth—stop their fire."

"Halt!" cried Polwarth, brandishing his sword fiercely among his men, "come to an order, or I'll fell ye to the earth."

But the excitement which had been gathering to a head for so many hours, and the animosity which had so long been growing between the troops and the people, were not to be repressed at a word. It was only when Pitcairn himself rode in among the soldiers, and, aided by his officers, beat down their arms, that the uproar was gradually quelled, and something like order was again restored. Before this was effected, however, a few scattering shot were thrown back from their flying adversaries, though without material injury to the British.

When the firing had ceased, officers and men stood gazing at each other for a few moments, as if even they could foresee some of the mighty events which were to follow the deeds of that hour. The smoke slowly arose, like a lifted veil, from the green, and, mingling with the fogs of morning, drove heavily across the country, as if to communicate the fatal intelligence that the final appeal to arms had been made. Every eye was bent inquiringly on the fatal green, and Lionel beheld, with a feeling allied to anguish, a few men at a distance, writhing and struggling in their wounds, while some five or six bodies lay stretched upon the grass in the appalling quiet of death. Sickening at the sight, he turned, and walked away by himself, while the remainder of the troops, alarmed by the reports of the arms, were eagerly pressing up from the rear to join their comrades. Unwittingly he approached the church, nor did he awake from the deep abstraction into which he had fallen, until he was aroused by the extraordinary spectacle of Job Pray, issuing from the edifice with an air in which menace was singularly blended with resentment and fear. The changeling pointed earnestly to the body of a man, who, having been wounded, had crept for refuge near to the door of the temple, in which he had so often worshipped that Being to whom he had been thus hurriedly sent to render his last and great account, and said solemnly—

"You have killed one of God's creatures; and he'll remember it!"

"I would it were one only," said Lionel; "but they are many, and none can tell where the carnage is to cease."

"Do you think," said Job, looking furtively around to assure himself that no other overheard him, "that the King can kill men in the Bay colony as he can in London? They'll take this up in old Funnel and 'twill ring again, from the North End to the Neck."

"What can they do, boy, after all," said Lionel, forgetting at the moment that he whom he addressed had been denied the reason of his kind—"the power of Britain is too mighty for these scattered and unprepared colonies to cope with, and prudence would tell the people to desist from resistance while yet they may."

"Does the king believe there is more prudence in London than there is in Boston?" returned the simpleton; "he needn't think, because the people were quiet at the massacre, there'll be no stir about this—you have killed one of God's creatures," added the lad, "and he'll remember it!"

"How came you here, sirrah?" demanded Lionel, suddenly recollecting himself; "did you not tell me that you were going out to fish for your mother?"

"And if I did," returned the other, sullenly, "an't there fish in the ponds as well as in the bay, and can't Nab have a fresh taste?—Job don't know there is any act of Parliament ag'in taking brook trout."

"Fellow, you are attempting to deceive me! Some one is practising on your ignorance, and, knowing you to be a fool, is employing you on errands that may one day cost your life."

"The king can't send Job on a'r'nds," said the lad, proudly; "for there is no law for it, and Job won't go."

"Your knowledge will undo you, simpleton—who should teach you these niceties of the law?"

"Why, do you think the Boston people so dumb as not to know the law?" asked Job, with unfeigned astonishment—"and Ralph, too—he knows as much law as the king—he told me it was ag'in all law to shoot at the minute-men unless they fired first, because the colony has a right to train whenever it pleases."

"Ralph!" said Lionel, eagerly—"can Ralph be with you, then! 'tis impossible; I left him ill, and at home—

neither would he mingle in such a business as this, at his years."

"I expect Ralph has seen bigger armies than the light-infantry, and grannies, and all the soldiers left in town put together," said Job, evasively.

Lionel was far too generous to practise on the simplicity of his companion, with a view to extract any secret which might endanger his liberty, but he felt a deep concern in the welfare of a young man, who had been thrown in his way in the manner already related. He therefore pursued the subject, with the double design to advise Job against any dangerous connections, and to relieve his own anxiety on the subject of the aged stranger. But to all his interrogatories the lad answered guardedly, and with a discretion which denoted that he possessed no small share of cunning, though a higher order of intellect had been denied him.

"I repeat to you," said Lionel, losing his patience, "that it is important for me to meet the man you call Ralph in the country, and I wish to know if he is to be seen near here."

"Ralph scorns a lie," returned Job—"go where he promised to meet you, and see if he don't come."

"But no place was named—and this unhappy event may embarrass him, or frighten him——"

"Frighten him!" repeated Job, shaking his head with solemn earnestness; "you can't frighten Ralph!"

"His daring may prove his misfortune. Boy, I ask you for the last time whether the old man——"

Perceiving Job to shrink back timidly, and lower in his looks, Lionel paused, and casting a glance behind him, beheld the captain of grenadiers standing with folded arms, silently contemplating the body of the American.

"Will you have the goodness to explain to me, Major Lincoln," said the captain, when he perceived himself observed, "why this man lies here dead?"

"You see the wound in his breast?"

"It is a palpable and baistly truth, that he has been shot—but why, or with what design?"

"I must leave that question to be answered by our superiors, Captain M'Fuse," returned Lionel. "It is, however, rumored that the expedition is out to seize certain magazines of provisions and arms, which the colonists have been collecting, it is feared, with hostile intentions."

"I had my own sagacious thoughts that we were bent

on some such glorious errand!" said M'Fuse, with strong contempt expressed in his hard features. "Tell me, Major Lincoln—you are certainly but a young soldier, though, being of the staff, you should know—does Gage think we can have a war with the arms and ammunition all on one side? We have had a long p'ace, Major Lincoln, and now, when there is a small prospect of some of the peculiarities of our profession arising, we are commanded to do the very thing which is most likely to defeat the object of war."

"I do not know that I rightly understand you, sir," said Lionel; "there can be but little glory gained by such troops as we possess, in a contest with the unarmed and undisciplined inhabitants of any country."

"Exactly my maining, sir; it is quite obvious that we understand each other thoroughly, without a world of circumlocution. The lads are doing very well at present, and if left to themselves a few months longer, it may become a creditable affair. You know, as well as I do, Major Lincoln, that time is necessary to make a soldier, and if they are hurried into the business, you might as well be chasing a mob up Ludgate hill, for the honor you will gain. A discrate officer would nurse this little matter, instead of resorting to such precipitation. To my id'a'a's, sir, the man before us has been butchered, and not slain in honorable battle!"

"There is much reason to fear that others may use the same term in speaking of the affair," returned Lionel; "God knows how much cause we may have to lament the death of the poor man!"

"On that topic, the man may be said to have gone through a business that was to be done, and is not to be done over again," said the captain, very coolly, "and therefore his death can be no very great calamity to himself, whatever it may be to us. If these minute-men—and, as they stand but a minute, they 'arn their name like worthy fellows—if these minute-men, sir, stood in your way, you should have whipped them from the green with your ramrods."

"Here is one who may tell you that they are not to be treated like children either," said Lionel, turning to the place which had been so recently occupied by Job Pray, but which, to his surprise, he now found vacant. While he was yet looking around him, wondering whither the lad could so suddenly have withdrawn, the drums beat the

signal to form, and a general bustle among the soldiery showed them to be on the eve of further movements. The two gentlemen instantly rejoined their companions, walking thoughtfully towards the troops, though influenced by such totally different views of the recent transactions.

During the short halt of the advance, the whole detachment was again united, and a hasty meal had been taken. The astonishment which succeeded the rencontre, had given place, among the officers, to a military pride, capable of sustaining them in much more arduous circumstances. Even the ardent looks of professional excitement were to be seen in most of their countenances, as with glittering arms, waving banners, and timing their march to the enlivening music of their band, they wheeled from the fatal spot, and advanced again, with proud and measured steps, along the highway. If such was the result of the first encounter on the lofty and tempered spirits of the gentlemen of the detachment, its effect on the common hirelings in the ranks, was still more palpable and revolting. Their coarse jests, and taunting looks, as they moved by the despised victims of their disciplined skill, together with the fierce and boastful expression of brutal triumph, which so many among them betrayed, exhibited the infallible evidence, that, having tasted of blood, they were now ready, like tigers, to feed on it till they were glutted.

CHAPTER X.

“There was mounting ’mong Græmes of the Netherby clan ;
Fosters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran ;
There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lea.”—*Marmion*.

THE pomp of military parade, with which the troops marched from the village of Lexington, as the little hamlet was called, where the foregoing events occurred, soon settled again into the sober and business-like air of men earnestly bent on the achievement of their object. It was no longer a secret that they were to proceed two leagues further into the interior, to destroy the stores already mentioned, and which were now known to be collected at Concord, the town where the Congress of Provincial Delegates, who were substituted by the colonists for the ancient legislatures of the province, held their meetings. As the march

could not now be concealed, it became necessary to resort to expedition, in order to insure its successful termination. The veteran officer of marines, so often mentioned, resumed his post in front, and at the head of the same companies of the light corps, which he had before led, pushed in advance of the heavier column of the grenadiers. Polwarth, by this arrangement, perceived himself again included among those on whose swiftness of foot so much depended. When Lionel rejoined his friend, he found him at the head of his men, marching with so grave an air as at once induced the major to give him credit for regrets much more commendable than such as were connected with his physical distress. The files were once more opened for room, as well as for air, which was becoming necessary, as a hot sun began to dissipate the mists of the morning, and shed that enervating influence on the men, so peculiar to the first warmth of an American spring.

"This has been a hasty business altogether, Major Lincoln," said Polwarth, as Lionel took his wonted station at the side of the other, and dropped mechanically into the regular step of the party—"I know not that it is quite as lawful to knock a man in the head as a bullock."

"You then agree with me in thinking our attack hasty, if not cruel?"

"Hasty! most unequivocally. Haste may be called the distinctive property of the expedition; and whatever destroys the appetite of an honest man, may be set down as cruel. I have not been able to swallow a mouthful of breakfast, Leo. A man must have the cravings of a hyena, and the stomach of an ostrich, to eat and digest with such work as this of ours before his eyes."

"And yet the men regard their acts with triumph!"

"The dogs are drilled into it. But you saw how sober the Provincials looked in the matter; we must endeavor to soothe their feelings in the best manner we can."

"Will they not despise our consolation and apologies, and look rather to themselves for redress and vengeance?"

Polwarth smiled contemptuously, and there was an air of pride about him that gave an appearance of elasticity even to his heavy tread, as he answered—

"The thing is a bad thing, Major Lincoln, and, if you will, a wicked thing—but take the assurance of a man who knows the country well, there will be no attempts at vengeance; and as for redress, in a military way, the thing is impossible."

"I have dwelt two years, Major Lincoln, in the very heart of the country," said Polwarth, without turning his eyes from the steady gaze he maintained on the long road which lay before him, "even three hundred miles beyond the inhabited districts; and I should know the character of the nation, as well as its resources. In respect to the latter, there is no esculent thing within its borders, from a humming-bird to a buffalo, or from an artichoke to a watermelon, that I have not, on some occasion or other, had tossed up, in a certain way—therefore, I can speak with confidence, and do not hesitate to say, that the colonists will never fight; nor if they had the disposition, do they possess the means to maintain a war."

"Perhaps, sir," returned Lionel sharply, "you have consulted the animals of the country too closely to be acquainted with its spirits?"

"The relation between them is intimate—tell me what food a man diets on, and I will furnish you with his character. 'Tis morally impossible that a people who eat their pudding before the meats, after the fashion of these colonists, can ever make good soldiers, because the appetite is appeased before the introduction of the succulent nutriment of the flesh, into——"

"Enough! spare me the remainder," interrupted Lionel—"too much has been said already to prove the inferiority of the American to the European animal, and your reasoning is conclusive."

"Parliament must do something for the families of the sufferers."

"Parliament!" echoed Lionel, with bitter emphasis; "yes, we shall be called on to pass resolutions to commend the decision of the general, and the courage of the troops; and then, after we have added every possible insult to the injury, under the conviction of our imaginary supremacy, we may hear of some paltry sum to the widows and orphans cited as an evidence of the unbounded generosity of the nation!"

"The feeding of six or seven broods of young Yankees is no such trifle, Major Lincoln," returned Polwarth; "and there I trust the unhappy affair will end. We are now marching on Concord, a place with a most auspicious name, where we shall find repose under its shadow, as well as the food of this home-made parliament, which they have gotten together. These considerations alone support me under the fatigue of this direful trot with which old Pit-

cairn goes over the ground—does the man think he is hunting with a pack of beagles at his heels!”

The opinion expressed by his companion, concerning the martial propensities of the Americans, was one too common among the troops to excite any surprise in Lionel; but, disgusted with the illiberality of the sentiment, and secretly offended at the supercilious manner with which the other expressed these injurious opinions of his countrymen, he continued his route in silence, while Polwarth speedily lost his loquacious propensity in a sense of the fatigue that assailed every muscle and joint in his body.

That severe training of the corps, concerning which the captain vented such frequent complaints, now stood the advance in good service. It was apparent that the whole country was in a state of high alarm, and small bodies of armed men were occasionally seen on the heights that flanked their route, though no attempts were made to revenge the deaths of those who fell at Lexington. The march of the troops was accelerated rather with a belief that the colonists might remove, or otherwise secrete the stores, than from any apprehension that they would dare to oppose the progress of the chosen troops of the army. The slight resistance of the Americans in the rencontre of that morning, was already a jest among the soldiers, who sneeringly remarked that the term of “minute-men” was deservedly applied to warriors who had proved themselves so dexterous at flight. In short, every opprobrious and disrespectful epithet, that contempt and ignorance could invent, were freely lavished on the forbearing mildness of the suffering colonists. In this temper the troops reached a point whence the modest spire and roofs of Concord became visible. A small body of the colonists retired through the place as the English advanced, and the detachment entered the town without the least resistance, and with the appearance of conquerors. Lionel was not long in discovering from such of the inhabitants as remained, that, notwithstanding their approach had been known for some time, the events of that morning were yet a secret from the people of the village. Detachments from the light corps were immediately sent in various directions; some to search for the ammunition and provisions, and some to guard the approaches to the place. One, in particular, followed the retreating footsteps of the Americans, and took post at a bridge, at some little distance, which cut off the communication with the country to the northward.

In the meantime, the work of destruction was commenced in the town chiefly under the superintendence of the veteran officer of the marines. The few male inhabitants who remained in their dwellings, were of necessity peaceable, though Lionel could read, in their flushed cheeks and gleaming eyes, the secret indignation of men, who, accustomed to the protection of the law, now found themselves subjected to the insults and wanton abuses of a military inroad. Every door was flung open, and no place was held sacred from the rude scrutiny of the licentious soldiery. Taunts and execrations soon mingled with the seeming moderation with which the search had commenced, and loud exultation was betrayed, even among the officers, as the scanty provisions of the colonists were gradually brought to light. It was not a moment to respect private rights, and the freedom and ribaldry of the men were on the point of becoming something more serious, when the report of fire-arms was heard suddenly to issue from the post held by the light-infantry, at the bridge. A few scattering shot were succeeded by a volley, which was answered by another, with the quickness of lightning, and then the air became filled with the incessant rattling of a sharp conflict. Every arm was suspended, and each tongue became mute with astonishment, and the men abandoned their occupations as these unexpected sounds of war broke on their ears. The chiefs of the party were seen in consultation, and horsemen rode furiously into the place, to communicate the nature of this new conflict. The rank of Major Lincoln soon obtained for him a knowledge that it was thought impolitic to communicate to the whole detachment. Notwithstanding it was apparent that they who brought the intelligence were anxious to give it the most favorable aspect, he soon discovered that the same body of Americans, which had retired at their approach, having attempted to return to their homes in the town, had been fired on at the bridge, and in the skirmish which succeeded, the troops had been compelled to give way with loss. The effect of this prompt and spirited conduct on the part of the provincials produced a sudden alteration, not only in the aspect, but also in the proceedings of the troops. The detachments were recalled, and the drums beat to arms, and, for the first time, both officers and men seemed to recollect that they had six leagues to march through a country that hardly contained a friend. Still few or no enemies were visible, with the

exception of those men of Concord, who had already drawn blood freely from the invaders of their domestic sanctuaries. The dead, and all the common wounded, were left where they had fallen, and it was thought an unfavorable omen among the observant of the detachment, that a wounded young subaltern, of rank and fortune, was also abandoned to the mercy of the exasperated Americans. The privates caught the infection from their officers, and Lionel saw, that in place of the high and insulting confidence, with which the troops had wheeled into the streets of Concord, that they left them, when the order was given to march, with faces bent anxiously on the surrounding heights, and with looks that bespoke a consciousness of the dangers that were likely to beset the long road which lay before them.

Their apprehensions were not groundless. The troops had hardly commenced their march before a volley was fired upon them from the protection of a barn, and as they advanced, volley succeeded volley, and musket answered musket from behind every cover that offered to their assailants. At first these desultory and feeble attacks were but little regarded; a brisk charge, and a smart fire of a few moments never failed to disperse their enemies, when the troops again proceeded for a short distance unmolested. But the alarm of the preceding night had gathered the people over an immense extent of country; and, having waited for information, those nearest to the scene of action were already pressing forward to the assistance of their friends. There was but little order, and no concert among the Americans; but each party, as it arrived, pushed into the fray, hanging on the skirts of their enemies, or making spirited, though ineffectual efforts to stop their progress. While the men from the towns behind them pressed upon their rear, the population in their front accumulated in bodies, like a rolling ball of snow, and before half the distance between Concord and Lexington was accomplished, Lionel perceived that the safety of their boasted power was in extreme jeopardy. During the first hour of these attacks, while they were yet distant, desultory and feeble, the young soldier had marched by the side of M'Fuse, who shook his head disdainfully whenever a shot whistled near him, and did not fail to comment freely on the folly of commencing a war thus prematurely, which, if properly nursed, might, to use his own words, "be in time brought to something pretty and interesting."

"You perceive, Major Lincoln," he added, "that these provincials have got the first elements of the art, for the rascals fire with exceeding accuracy, when the distance is considered ; and six months or a year of close drilling would make them good for something in a regular charge. They have got a smart crack to their p'aces, and a pretty whiz to their lead already ; if they could but learn to deliver their fire in platoons, the lads might make some impression on the light-infantry even now ; and in a year or two, sir, they would not be unworthy of the favors of the grenadiers."

Lionel listened to this, and much other similar discourse, with a vacant ear ; but as the combat thickened, the blood of the young man began to course more swiftly through his veins ; and at length, excited by the noise and the danger which was pressing more closely around them, he mounted, and, riding to the commander of the detachment, tendered his assistance as a volunteer aid, having lost every other sensation in youthful blood, and the pride of arms. He was immediately charged with orders for the advance, and driving his spurs into his steed, he dashed through the scattered line of fighting and jaded troops, and galloped to its head. Here he found several companies, diligently employed in clearing the way for their comrades, as new foes appeared at every few rods that they advanced. Even as Lionel approached, a heavy sheet of fire flashed from a close barn-yard, full in the faces of the leading files, sending the swift engines of death into the very centre of the party.

"Wheel a company of the light-infantry, Captain Polwarth," cried the old major of marines, who battled stoutly in the van, "and drive the skulking scoundrels from their ambush."

"Oh ! by the sweets of ease, and the hopes of a halt ! but here is another tribe of these white savages !" responded the unfortunate captain—"Look out, my brave men ! blaze away over the walls on your left—give no quarter to the annoying rascals—get the first shot—give them a foot of your steel."

While venting such terrible denunciations and commands, which were drawn from the peaceable captain by the force of circumstances, Lionel beheld his friend disappear amid the buildings of the farm-yard in a cloud of smoke, followed by his troops. In a few minutes afterwards, as the line toiled its way up the hill on which this

scene occurred, Polwarth reappeared, issuing from the fray with his face blackened and grimed with powder, while a sheet of flame arose from the spot, which soon laid the devoted buildings of the unfortunate husbandman in ruins.

"Ha! Major Lincoln," he cried, as he approached the other, "do you call these light-infantry movements! to me they are the torments of the damned!—Go, you who have influence, and, what is better, a horse, go to Smith, and tell him if he will call a halt, I will engage, with my single company, to seat ourselves in any field he may select, and keep these blood-suckers at bay for an hour, while the detachment can rest and satisfy their hunger—trusting that he will then allow time for his defenders to perform the same necessary operations. A night-march, no breakfast—a burning sun—mile after mile—no halt, and nothing but fire—fire—'tis opposed to every principle in physics, and even to the anatomy of man, to think he can endure it!"

Lionel endeavored to encourage his friend to new exertions, and, turning away from their leader, spoke cheerfully, and with a martial tone, to his troops. The men cheered as they passed, and dashed forward to new encounters; the Americans yielding sullenly, but necessarily, to the constant charges of the bayonet, to which the regulars resorted to dislodge them. As the advance moved on again, Lionel turned to contemplate the scene in the rear. They had now been marching and fighting for two hours, with little or no cessation; and it was but too evident that the force of the assailants was increasing, both in numbers and in daring, at each step they took. On either side of the highway, along the skirts of every wood or orchard, in the open fields, and from every house, barn, or cover in sight, the flash of fire-arms was to be seen, while the shouts of the English grew, at each instant, feebler and less inspiring. Heavy clouds of smoke rose above the valley, into which he looked, and mingled with the dust of the march, drawing an impenetrable veil before the view; but as the wind, at moments, shoved it aside, he caught glimpses of the worried and faltering platoons of the party, sometimes breasting and repulsing an attack with spirit, and at others shrinking from the contest, with an ill-concealed desire to urge their retreat to the verge of an absolute flight. Young as he was, Major Lincoln knew enough of his profession to understand that nothing but the want of concert, and of a unity of command among the

Americans, saved the detachment from total destruction. The attacks were growing extremely spirited, and not unfrequently close and bloody, though the discipline of the troops enabled them still to bear up against this desultory and divided warfare, when Lionel heard, with a pleasure he could not conceal, the loud shouts that arose from the van, as the cheering intelligence was proclaimed through the ranks, that the cloud of dust in their front was raised by a chosen brigade of their comrades, which had come most timely to their succor, with the heir of Northumberland at its head. The Americans gave way as the two detachments joined, and the artillery of the succors opened upon their flying parties, giving a few minutes of stolen rest to those who needed it so much. Polwarth threw himself flat on the earth, as Lionel dismounted at his side, and his example was followed by the whole party, who lay panting, under the heat and fatigue, like worried deer, that had succeeded in throwing the hounds from their scent.

"As I am a gentleman of simple habits, and a man innocent of all this bloodshed, Major Lincoln," said the captain, "I pronounce this march to be a most unjust draft on the resources of human nature. I have journeyed at least five leagues between this spot and that place of discord that they falsely call Concord, within two hours, amidst dust, smoke, groans, and other infernal cries, that would cause the best trained racer in England to bolt; and breathing an air, all the time, that would boil an egg in two minutes and a quarter, if fairly exposed to it."

"You overrate the distance—'tis but two leagues by the stones——"

"Stones!" interrupted Polwarth—"I scorn their lies—I have a leg here that is a better index for miles, feet, or even inches, than was ever chiselled in stone."

"We must not contest this idle point," returned Lionel, "for I see the troops are about to dine; and we have need of every moment to reach Boston before the night closes around us."

"Eat! Boston! night!" slowly repeated Polwarth, raising himself on one arm, and staring wildly about him. "Surely no man among us is so mad as to talk of moving from this spot short of a week—it would take half that time to receive the internal refreshment necessary to our systems, and the remainder to restore us healthy appetites."

"Such, however, are the orders of the Earl Percy, from

whom I learn that the whole country is rising in our front."

"Ay, but they are fellows who slept peacefully in their beds the past night ; and I dare say that every dog among them ate his half-pound of pork, together with additions suitable for a breakfast, before he crossed his threshold this morning. But with us the case is different. It is incumbent on two thousand British troops to move with deliberation, if it should be only for the credit of his majesty's arms. No, no—the gallant Percy too highly respects his princely lineage and name, to assume the appearance of flight before a mob of base-born hinds !"

The intelligence of Lionel was nevertheless true ; for, after a short halt, allowing barely time enough to the troops to eat a hasty meal, the drums again beat the signal to march, and Polwarth, as well as many hundred others, was reluctantly compelled to resume his feet, under the penalty of being abandoned to the fury of the exasperated Americans. While the troops were in a state of rest, the field-pieces of the reinforcement kept their foes at a distance ; but the instant the guns were limbered, and the files had once more opened for room, the attacks were renewed from every quarter, with redoubled fury. The excesses of the troops, who had begun to vent their anger by plundering and firing the dwellings that they passed, added to the bitterness of the attacks ; and the march had not been renewed many minutes, before a fiercer conflict raged along its skirts than had been before witnessed on that day.

"Would to God that the great Northumbrian would form us in order of battle, and make a fair field with the Yankees," groaned Polwarth, as he toiled his way once more with the advance—"half an hour would settle the matter, and a man would then possess the gratification of seeing himself a victor, or at least of knowing that he was comfortably and quietly dead."

"Few of us would ever arrive in the morning, if we left the Americans a night to gather in ; and a halt of an hour would lose us the advantages of the whole march," returned Lionel.—"Cheer up, my old comrade, and you will establish your reputation for activity forever—here comes a party of the provincials over the crest of the hill to keep you in employment."

Polwarth cast a look of despair at Lionel, as he muttered in reply—

"Employment! God knows that there has not been a single muscle, sinew, or joint, in my body in a state of wholesome rest for four-and-twenty hours!" Then turning to his men, he cried, with tones so cheerful and animated, that they seemed to proceed from a final and closing exertion, as he led them gallantly into the approaching fray—"Scatter the dogs, my brave friends—away with them like gnats, like mosquitoes, like leeches, as they are—give it them—lead and steel by handfuls——"

"On—push on with the advance!" shouted the old major of marines, who observed the leading platoons to stagger.

The voice of Polwarth was once more heard in the din, and their irregular assailants sullenly yielded before the charge.

"On—on with the advance!" cried fifty voices out of a cloud of smoke and dust that was moving up the hill, on whose side this encounter occurred.

In this manner the war continued to roll slowly onward, following the weary and heavy footsteps of the soldiery, who had now toiled for many miles, surrounded by the din of battle, and leaving in their path the bloody impressions of their footsteps. Lionel was enabled to trace their route, far towards the north, by the bright red spots, which lay scattered in alarming numbers along the highway, and in the fields, through which the troops occasionally moved. He even found time, in the intervals of rest, to note the difference in the characters of the combatants. Whenever the ground or the circumstances admitted of a regular attack, the dying confidence of the troops would seem restored; and they moved up to the charge with the bold carriage which high discipline inspires, rending the air with shouts, while their enemies melted before their power in sullen silence, never ceasing to use their weapons, however, with an expertness that rendered them doubly dangerous. The direction of the columns frequently brought the troops over ground that had been sharply contested in front, and the victims of these short struggles came under the eyes of the detachment. It was necessary to turn a deaf ear to the cries and prayers of many wounded soldiers, who, with horror and abject fear written on every feature of their countenances, were the helpless witnesses of the retreating files of their comrades. On the other hand, the American lay in his blood, regarding the passing detachment with a stern and indignant eye, that appeared to

look far beyond his individual suffering. Over one body, Lionel pulled the reins of his horse, and he paused a moment to consider the spectacle. It was the lifeless form of a man, whose white locks, hollow cheeks, and emaciated frame, denoted that the bullet which had stricken him to the earth had anticipated the irresistible decrees of time but a very few days. He had fallen on his back, and his glazed eye expressed, even in death, the honest resentment he had felt while living : and his palsied hand continued to grasp the fire-lock, old and time-worn, like its owner, with which he had taken the field in behalf of his country.

"Where can a contest end which calls such champions to its aid!" exclaimed Lionel, observing that the shadow of another spectator fell across the wan features of the dead—"who can tell where this torrent of blood can be stayed, or how many are to be its victims!"

Receiving no answer, he raised his eyes, and discovered that he had unwittingly put this searching question to the very man whose rashness had precipitated the war. It was the major of marines, who sat looking at the sight, for a minute, with an eye as vacant as the one that seemed to throw back his wild gaze, and then, rousing from his trance, he buried his rowels in the flanks of his horse, and disappeared in the smoke that enveloped a body of the grenadiers, waving his sword on high, and shouting—

"On—push on with the advance!"

Major Lincoln slowly followed, musing on the scene he had witnessed, when, to his surprise, he encountered Polwarth, seated on a rock by the roadside, looking with a listless and dull eye at the retreating columns. Checking his charger, he inquired of his friend if he were hurt.

"Only melted," returned the captain; "I have outdone the speed of man this day, Major Lincoln, and can do no more. If you see any of my friends in dear England, tell them that I met my fate as a soldier should, stationary; though I am actually melting away in rivulets, like the snows of April."

"Good God! you will not remain here to be slain by the provincials, by whom you see we are completely enveloped?"

"I am preparing a speech for the first Yankee who may approach. If he be a true man, he will melt into tears at my sufferings this day—if a savage, my heirs will be spared the charges of my funeral."

Lionel would have continued his remonstrances, but a

fierce encounter between a flanking party of the troops and a body of Americans, drove the former close upon him ; and, leaping the wall, he rallied his comrades, and turned the tide of battle in their favor. He was drawn far from the spot by the vicissitudes of the combat, and there was a moment, while passing from one body of the troops to another, that he found himself unexpectedly alone, in a most dangerous vicinity to a small wood. The hurried call of "Pick off that officer !" first aroused him to his extreme danger, and he had mechanically bowed himself on the neck of his charger, in expectation of the fatal messengers, when a voice was heard among the Americans, crying, in tones that caused every nerve in his body to thrill—

"Spare him ! for the love of that God you worship, spare him !"

The overwhelming sensations of the moment prevented flight, and the young man beheld Ralph, running with frantic gestures, along the skirts of the cover, beating up the fire-arms of twenty Americans, and repeating his cries in a voice that did not seem to belong to a human being—then, in the confusion which whirled through his brain, Lionel thought himself a prisoner, as a man, armed with a long rifle, glided from the wood, and laid his hand on the rein of his bridle, saying earnestly—

"'Tis a bloody day, and God will remember it ; but if Major Lincoln will ride straight down the hill, the people won't fire for fear of hitting Job.—and when Job fires, he'll shoot that granny who's getting over the wall, and there'll never be a stir about it in Funnel-Hall."

Lionel wheeled away quicker than thought, and as his charger took long and desperate leaps down the slight declivity, he heard the shouts of the Americans behind him, the crack of Job's rifle, and the whizzing of the bullet which the changeling sent, as he had promised, in a direction to do him no harm. On gaining a place of comparative safety, he found Pitcairn in the act of abandoning his bleeding horse, the close and bitter attacks of the provincials rendering it no longer safe for an officer to be seen riding on the flanks of the detachment. Lionel, though he valued his steed highly, had also received so many intimations of the dangerous notice he had attracted, that he was soon obliged to follow this example ; and he saw, with deep regret, the noble animal scouring across the fields with a loose rein, snorting and snuffing the tainted air. He now joined a party of the combatants on

foot, and continued to animate them to new exertions during the remainder of the tedious way.

From the moment the spires of Boston met the view of the troops, the struggle became intensely interesting. New vigor was imparted to their weary frames by the cheering sight, and, assuming once more the air of high martial training, they bore up against the assaults of their enemies with renewed spirit. On the other hand, the Americans seemed aware that the moments of vengeance were passing swiftly away, and boys, and gray-headed men, the wounded and the active, crowded around their invaders, as if eager to obtain a parting blow. Even the peaceful ministers of God were known to take the field on that memorable occasion, and, mingling with their parishioners, to brave every danger in a cause which they believed in consonance with their holy calling. The sun was sinking over the land, and the situation of the detachment had become nearly desperate, when Percy abandoned the idea of reaching the Neck, across which he had proudly marched that morning from Boston, and strained every nerve to get the remainder of his command within the peninsula of Charlestown. The crests and the sides of the heights were alive with men, and as the shades of evening closed about the combatants, the bosoms of the Americans beat high with hope, while they witnessed the faltering steps and slackened fire of the troops. But high discipline finally so far prevailed as to snatch the English from the very grasp of destruction, and enabled them to gain the narrow entrance to the desired shelter, just as night had come apparently to seal their doom.

Lionel stood leaning against a fence, as this fine body of men, which a few hours before had thought themselves equal to a march through the colonies, defiled slowly and heavily by him, dragging their weary and exhausted limbs up the toilsome ascent of Bunker-Hill. The haughty eyes of most of the officers were bent to the earth in shame; and the common herd, even in that place of security, cast many an anxious glance behind them, to assure themselves that the despised inhabitants of the province were no longer pressing on their footsteps. Platoon after platoon passed, each man compelled to depend on his own wearied limbs for support, until Lionel at last saw a solitary horseman slowly ascending among the crowd. To his utter amazement and great joy, as this officer approached, he beheld Polwarth, mounted on his own steed, riding toward

him, with a face of the utmost complacency and composure. The dress of the captain was torn in many places, and the housings of the saddle were cut into ribbons, while here and there a spot of clotted blood, on the sides of the beast, served to announce the particular notice the rider had received from the Americans. The truth was soon extorted from the honest soldier. The love of life had returned with the sight of the abandoned charger. He acknowledged it had cost him his watch to have the beast caught; but, once established in the saddle, no danger, nor any remonstrances, could induce him to relinquish a seat which he found so consoling after all the fatigue and motion of that evil day, in which he had been compelled to share in the calamities of those who fought on the side of the crown, in the memorable battle of Lexington.

CHAPTER XI.

*"Fluel.—Is it not lawful, an' please your majesty,
To tell how many is killed?"—King Henry V.*

WHILE a strong party of the royal troops took post on the height which commanded the approach to their position, the remainder penetrated deeper into the peninsula, or were transported by the boats of the fleet to the town of Boston. Lionel and Polwarth passed the strait with the first division of the wounded, the former having no duty to detain him any longer with the detachment, and the latter stoutly maintaining that his corporeal sufferings gave him an undoubted claim to include his case among the casualties of the day. Perhaps no officer in the army of the king felt less chagrin at the result of this inroad than Major Lincoln; for, notwithstanding his attachment to his prince, and adopted country, he was keenly sensitive on the subject of the reputation of his real countrymen; a sentiment that is honorable to our nature, and which never deserts any that do not become disloyal to its purest and noblest impulses. Even while he regretted the price at which his comrades had been taught to appreciate the characters of those whose long and mild forbearance had been misconstrued into pusillanimity, he rejoiced that the eyes of the more aged would now be opened to the truth, and that the mouths of the young and thoughtless were

to be for ever closed in shame. Although the actual losses of the two detachments were probably concealed from motives of policy, it was early acknowledged to amount to about one-sixth of the whole number employed.

On the wharf Lionel and Polwarth separated ; the latter agreeing to repair speedily to the private quarters of his friend, where he promised himself a solace for the compulsory abstinence and privations of his long march, and the former taking his way toward Tremont Street, with a view to allay the uneasiness which the secret and flattering whisperings of hope taught him to believe his fair young kinswomen would feel in his behalf. At every corner he encountered groups of earnest townsmen, listening with greedy ears to the particulars of the contest, a few walking away dejected at the spirit exhibited by that country they had vilified to its oppressors ; but most of them regarding the passing form of one whose disordered dress announced his participation in the affair, with glances of stern satisfaction. As Lionel tapped at the door of Mrs. Lechmere, he forgot his fatigue ; and when it opened, and he beheld Cecil standing in the hall, with every lineament of her fine countenance expressing the power of her emotions, he no longer remembered those trying dangers he had so lately escaped.

"Lionel !" exclaimed the young lady, clasping her hands with joy—"himself, and unhurt !" The blood rushed from her heart across her face to her forehead, and burying her shame in her hands, she burst into a flood of tears, and fled his presence.

Agnes Danforth received him with undisguised pleasure, nor would she indulge in a single question to appease her burning curiosity, until thoroughly assured of his perfect safety. Then, indeed, she remarked, with a smile of triumph seated on her arch features—

"Your march has been well attended, Major Lincoln ; from the upper windows I have seen some of the honors which the good people of Massachusetts have paid to their visitors."

"On my soul, if it were not for the dreadful consequences which must follow, I rejoice, as well as yourself, in the events of the day," said Lincoln ; "for a people are never certain of their rights until they are respected."

"Tell me, then, all, cousin Lincoln, that I may know how to boast of my parentage."

The young man gave her a short, but distinct and impar-

tial, account of all that had occurred, to which his fair listener attended with undisguised interest.

"Now, then," she exclaimed, as he ended, "there is an end forever of those biting taunts that have so long insulted our ears! But you know," she added, with a slight blush, and a smile most comically arch, "I had a double stake in the fortunes of the day—my country and my true love!"

"Oh! be at ease; your worshipper has returned, whole in body, and suffering in mind only through your cruelty—he performed the route with wonderful address, and really showed himself a soldier in danger."

"Nay, Major Lincoln," returned Agnes, still blushing, though she laughed; "you do not mean to insinuate that Peter Polwarth has walked forty miles between the rising and setting of the sun?"

"Between two sunsets he has done the deed, if you except a trifling *promenade à cheval*, on my own steed, whom Jonathan compelled me to abandon, and of whom he took, and maintained the possession, too, in spite of dangers of every kind."

"Really," exclaimed the wilful girl, clasping her hands in affected astonishment, though Lionel thought he could read inward satisfaction at his intelligence—"the prodigies of the man exceed belief! one wants the faith of father Abraham to credit such marvels! though, after the repulse of two thousand British soldiers by a body of husbandmen, I am prepared for an exceeding use of my credulity."

"The moment is then auspicious for my friend," whispered Lionel, rising to follow the flitting form of Cecil Dynevor, which he saw gliding into the opposite room, as Polwarth himself entered the apartment. "Credulity is said to be the great weakness of your sex, and I must leave you a moment exposed to the failing, and that too, in the dangerous company of the subject of our discourse."

"Now would you give half your hopes of promotion, and all your hopes of a war, Captain Polwarth, to know in what manner your character has been treated in your absence!" cried Agnes, blushing slightly. "I shall not, however, satisfy the cravings of your curiosity, but let it serve as a stimulant to better deeds than have employed you since we met last."

"I trust Lincoln has done justice to my service," returned the good-humored captain, "and that he has not

neglected to mention the manner in which I rescued his steed from the rebels."

"The what, sir?" interrupted Agnes, with a frown—"how did you style the good people of Massachusetts Bay?"

"I should have said the excited dwellers in the land, I believe. Ah! Miss Agnes, I have suffered this day as man never suffered before; and all on your behalf——"

"On my behalf! Your words require explanation, Captain Polwarth."

"'Tis impossible," returned the captain—"there are feelings and actions connected with the heart that will admit of no explanation. All I know is, that I have suffered unutterably on your account to-day; and what is unutterable, is in a great degree inexplicable."

"I shall set this down for what I understand occurs regularly in a certain description of tête-à-têtes—the expression of an unutterable thing! Surely, Major Lincoln had some reason to believe he left me at the mercy of my credulity!"

"You slander your own character, fair Agnes," said Polwarth, endeavoring to look piteously; "you are neither merciful nor credulous, or you would long since have believed my tale, and taken pity on my misery."

"Is not sympathy a sort—a kind—in short, is not sympathy a dreadful symptom in a certain disease?" asked Agnes, resting her eyes on the floor, and affecting a girlish embarrassment.

"Who can gainsay it!" cried the captain; "'tis the infallible way for a young lady to discover the bent of her inclinations. Thousands have lived in ignorance of their own affections until their sympathies have been awakened. But what means the question, my fair tormentor? May I dare to flatter myself that you at length feel for my pains!"

"I am sadly afraid 'tis but too true, Polwarth," returned Agnes, shaking her head, and continuing to look exceedingly grave.

Polwarth moved, with something like animation again, nigher to the amused girl; and attempted to take her hand, as he said—

"You restore me to life with your sweet acknowledgments—I have lived for six months like a dog under your frowns, but one kind word acts like a healing balm, and restores me to myself again!"

"Then my sympathy is evaporated!" returned Agnes.

"Throughout this long and anxious day have I fancied myself older than my good, staid, great-aunt ; and whenever certain thoughts have crossed my mind, I have even imagined a thousand of the ailings of age had encircled me—rheumatisms, gouts, asthmas, and numberless other aches and pains, exceedingly unbecoming to a young lady of nineteen. But you have enlightened me, and given vast relief to my apprehensions, by explaining it to be no more than sympathy. You see, Polwarth, what a wife you will obtain, should I ever, in a weak moment, accept you ; for I have already sustained one half your burthens !"

"A man is not made to be in constant motion, like the pendulum of that clock, Miss Danforth, and yet feel no fatigue," said Polwarth, more vexed than he would permit himself to betray ; "yet I flatter myself there is no officer in the light-infantry—you understand me to say the light-infantry—who has passed over more ground, within four-and-twenty hours, than the man who hastens, notwithstanding his exploits, to throw himself at your feet, even before he thinks of his ordinary rest."

"Captain Polwarth," said Agnes, rising, "for the compliment, if compliment it be, I thank you ; but," she added, losing her affected gravity in a strong natural feeling that shone in her dark eye, and illuminated the whole of her fine countenance, as she laid her hand impressively on her heart—"the man who will supplant the feelings which nature has impressed here, must not come to my feet, as you call it, from a field of battle, where he has been contending with my kinsmen, and helping to enslave my country. You will excuse me, sir, but as Major Lincoln is at home here, permit me, for a few minutes, to leave you to his hospitality."

She withdrew as Lionel re-entered, passing him on the threshold.

"I would rather be a leader in a stage-coach, or a running footman, than in love !" cried Polwarth—" 'tis a dog's life, Leo, and this girl treats me like a cart-horse ! But what an eye she has ! I could have lighted my segar by it—my heart is a heap of cinders. Why, Leo, what aileth thee ? throughout the whole of this damnable day, I have not before seen thee bear such a troubled look !"

"Let us withdraw to my private quarters," muttered the young man, whose aspect and air expressed the marks of extreme disturbance—" 'tis time to repair the disasters of our march."

"All that has been already looked to," said Polwarth, rising and limping, with sundry grimaces, in the best manner he was able, in a vain effort to equal the rapid strides of his companion. "My first business on leaving you was to borrow a conveyance of a friend, in which I rode to your place; and my next was to write to little Jimmy Craig, to offer an exchange of my company for his—for from this hour henceforth I denounce all light-infantry movements, and shall take the first opportunity to get back again into the dragoons; as soon as I have effected which, Major Lincoln, I propose to treat with you for the purchase of that horse. After that duty was performed—for, if self-preservation be commendable, it became a duty—I made out a bill of fare for Meriton, in order that nothing might be forgotten; after which, like yourself, Lionel, I hastened to the feet of my mistress—Ah! Major Lincoln, you are a happy man; for you there is no reception but smiles—and charms so——"

"Talk not to me, sir, of smiles," interrupted Lionel, impatiently, "nor of the charms of woman. They are all alike, capricious and unaccountable."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Polwarth, staring about him in wonder; "there is then favor for none, in this place, who battle for the king! There is a strange connection between Cupid and Mars, love and war; for here did I, after fighting all day like a Saracen, a Turk, Jenghis Khan, or, in short, anything but a good Christian, come with full intent to make a serious offer of my hand, commission, and of Polwarth Hall, to that treasonable vixen, when she repulses me with a frown and a sarcasm as biting as the salutation of a hungry man. But what an eye the girl has, and what a bloom, when she is a little more seasoned than common! Then you, too, Lionel, have been treated like a dog!"

"Like a fool, as I am," said Lionel, pacing haughtily over the ground at a rate that soon threw his companion too far in the rear to admit of further discourse until they reached the place of their destination. Here, to the no small surprise of both gentlemen, they found a company collected that neither was prepared to meet. At a side-table sat M'Fuse, discussing, with singular relish, some of the cold viands of the previous night's repast, and washing down his morsels with deep potations of the best wine of his host. In one corner of the room Seth Sage was posted, with the appearance of a man in duress, his hands being

tied before him, from which depended a long cord, that might, on emergency, be made to serve the purpose of a halter. Opposite to the prisoner, for such in truth he was, stood Job, imitating the example of the captain of grenadiers, who now and then tossed some fragment of his meal into the hat of the simpleton. Meriton and several of the menials of the establishment were in waiting.

"What have we here?" cried Lionel, regarding the scene with a curious eye. "Of what offence has Mr. Sage been guilty, that he bears those bonds?"

"Of the small crimes of tr'ason and homicide," returned M'Fuse, "if shooting at a man, with a hearty mind to kill him, can make a murder."

"It can't," said Seth, raising his eyes from the floor, where he had hitherto kept them in demure silence; "a man must kill with wicked intent to commit murder——"

"Hear to the blackguard, detailing the law as if he were my lord chief justice of the King's Bench!" interrupted the grenadier; "and what was your own wicked intention, ye skulking vagabond, but to kill me! I'll have you tried and hung for the same act."

"It's ag'in reason to believe that any jury will convict one man for the murder of another that an't dead," said Seth—"there's no jury to be found in the Bay colony, to do it."

"Bay colony, ye murdering thief and rebel!" cried the captain; "I'll have ye transported to England; ye shall be both transported and hung. By the Lord, I'll carry ye back to Ireland with me, and I'll hang ye up in the Green Island itself, and bury ye, in the heart of winter, in a bog——"

"But what is the offence," demanded Lionel, "that calls forth these severe threats?"

"The scoundrel has been out——"

"Out!"

"Ay, out! Damn it, sir, has not the whole country been like so many bees in search of a hive? Is your memory so short that ye forget already, Major Lincoln, the tramp the blackguards have given you over hill and dale, through thick and thin?"

"And was Mr. Sage, then, found among our enemies to-day?"

"Didn't I see him pull trigger on my own stature three times within as many minutes?" returned the angry captain; "and didn't he break the handle of my sword? and

have not I a bit of lead he calls a buck-shot in my shoulder as a present from the thief?"

"It's ag'in all law to call a man a thief," said Job, "unless you can prove it upon him; but it an't ag'in law to go in and out of Boston as often as you choose."

"Do you hear the rascals! They know every angle of the law as well or better than I do myself, who am the son of a Cork counsellor. I dare to say you were among them too, and that ye deserve the gallows as well as your commendable companion there."

"How is this!" said Lionel, turning quickly away from Job, with a view to prevent a reply that might endanger the safety of the changeling; "did you not only mingle in this rebellion, Mr. Sage, but also attempt the life of a gentleman who may be said, almost, to be an inmate of your own house?"

"I conclude," returned Seth, "it's best not to talk too much, seeing that no one can foretell what may happen."

"Hear to the cunning reprobate! He has not the grace to acknowledge his own sins, like an honest man," interrupted M'Fuse; "but I can save him that small trouble—I got tired, you must know, Major Lincoln, of being shot at like noxious vermin, from morning till night, without making some return to the compliments of those gentlemen who are out on the hills; and I took advantage of a turn, ye see, to double on a party of the uncivilized demons. This lad, here, got three good pulls at me before we closed and made an end of them with the steel, all but this fellow, who, having a becoming look for a gallows, I brought him in, as you see, for an exchange, intending to hang him the first favorable opportunity."

"If this be true, we must give him into the hands of the proper authorities," said Lionel, smiling at the confused account of the angry captain—"for it remains to be seen yet what course will be adopted with the prisoners in this singular contest."

"I should think nothing of the matter," returned M'Fuse, "if the reprobate had not tr'ated me like a beast of the field, with his buck-shot, and taking his aim each time, as though I had been a mad dog. Ye villain, do you call yourself a man, and aim at a fellow-creature as you would at a brute?"

"Why," said Seth, sullenly, "when a man has pretty much made up his mind to fight, I conclude it's best to take aim, in order to save ammunition and time."

"You acknowledge the charge, then?" demanded Lionel.

"As the major is a moderate man, and will hear to reason, I will talk the matter over with him rationally," said Seth, disposing himself to speak more to the purpose. "You see, I had a small call to Concurd early this morn-
ing——"

"Concord!" exclaimed Lionel.

"Yes, Concord," returned Seth, laying great stress on the first syllable, and speaking with an air of extreme innocence—"it lies here-away, say twenty or one-and-twenty miles——"

"Damn your Concords and your miles too," cried Polwarth; "is there a man in the army who can forget the deceitful place? Go on with your defence, without talking to us of the distance, who have measured the road by inches."

"The captain is hasty and rash!" said the deliberate prisoner—"but being there, I went out of the town with some company that I happened in with; and after a time we concluded to return—and so, as we came to a bridge about a mile beyond the place, we received considerable rough treatment from some of the king's troops, who were standing there——"

"What did they?"

"They fired at us, and killed two of our company, besides other threatening doings. There were some among us that took the matter up in considerable earnest, and there was a sharp toss about it for a few minutes; though finally the law prevailed."

"The law!"

"Certain—'tis ag'in all law, I believe the major will own, to shoot peaceable men on the public highway!"

"Proceed with your tale in your own way."

"That is pretty much the whole of it," said Seth, warily. "The people rather took that, and some other things that happened at Lexington, to heart, and I suppose the major knows the rest."

"But what has all this to do with your attempt to murder me, you hypocrite?" demanded M'Fuse—"confess the whole, ye thief, that I may hang you with an aisy conscience."

"Enough," said Lionel; "the man has acknowledged sufficient already to justify us in transferring him to the custody of others—let him be taken to the main guard, and delivered as a prisoner of this day."

"I hope the major will look to the things," said Seth, who instantly prepared to depart, but stopped on the threshold to speak—"I shall hold him accountable for all."

"Your property shall be protected, and I hope your life may not be in jeopardy," returned Lionel, waving his hand for those who guarded him to proceed. Seth turned, and left his own dwelling with the same quiet air which had distinguished him throughout the day; though there were occasional flashes from his quick, dark eyes, that looked like the glimmerings of a fading fire. Notwithstanding the threatening denunciation he had encountered, he left the house with a perfect conviction, that if his case were to be tried by those principles of justice which every man in the colony so well understood, it would be found that both he and his fellows had kept thoroughly on the windy side of the law.

During this singular and characteristic discourse, Polwarth, with the solitary exception we have recorded, had employed his time in forwarding the preparations for the banquet.

As Seth and his train disappeared, Lionel cast a furtive look at Job, who was a quiet, and apparently an undisturbed, spectator of the scene, and then turned his attention suddenly to his guests, as if fearful the folly of the changeling might betray his agency also in the deeds of the day. The simplicity of the lad, however, defeated the kind intentions of the major, for he immediately observed, without the least indication of fear—

"The king can't hang Seth Sage for firing back, when the rake-helly soldiers began first."

"Perhaps you were out too, master Solomon," cried M'Fuse, "amusing yourself at Concord, with a small party of select friends?"

"Job didn't go any further than Lexington," returned the lad, "and he hasn't got any friend, except old Nab."

"The *dévil* has possessed the minds of the people!" continued the grenadier—"lawyers and doctors—praists and sinners—old and young—big and little, beset us in our march, and here is a fool to be added to the number! I dare say that fellow, now, has attempted murder in his day too."

"Job scorns such wickedness," returned the unmoved simpleton; "he only shot one granny, and hit an officer in the arm."

"D'ye hear that, Major Lincoln?" cried M'Fuse, jumping from the seat which, notwithstanding the bitterness of his language, he had hitherto perseveringly maintained; "d'ye hear that shell of a man, that effigy, boasting of having killed a grenadier!"

"Hold!"—interrupted Lionel, arresting his excited companion by the arm—"remember we are soldiers, and that the boy is not a responsible being. No tribunal would ever sentence such an unfortunate creature to a gibbet; and in general he is as harmless as a babe——"

"The devil burn such babes—a pretty fellow is he to kill a man of six feet! and with a ducking gun, I'll engage. I'll not hang the rascal, Major Lincoln, since it is your particular wish—I'll only have him buried alive."

Job continued perfectly unmoved in his chair; and the captain, ashamed of his resentment against such unconscious imbecility, was soon persuaded to abandon his intentions of revenge, though he continued muttering his threats against the provincials, and his denunciations against such "an unmanly species of warfare," until the much-needed repast was ended.

Polwarth, having restored the equilibrium of his system by a hearty meal, hobbled to his bed, and M'Fuse, without any ceremony, took possession of another of the apartments in the tenement of Mr. Sage. The servants withdrew to their own entertainment; and Lionel, who had been sitting for the last half-hour in melancholy silence, now unexpectedly found himself alone with the changeling. Job had waited for this moment with exceeding patience, but when the door closed on Meriton, who was the last to retire, he made a movement that indicated some communication of more than usual importance, and succeeded in attracting the attention of his companion.

"Foolish boy!" exclaimed Lionel, as he met the unmeaning eye of the other, "did I not warn you that wicked men might endanger your life! How was it that I saw you in arms to-day against the troops?"

"How came the troops in arms ag'in Job?" returned the changeling—"they needn't think to wheel about the Bay province, clashing their godless drums and trumpets, burning houses, and shooting people, and find no stir about it!"

"Do you know that your life has been twice forfeited within twelve hours, by your own confession; once for murder, and again for treason against your king? You have acknowledged killing a man!"

"Yes," said the lad, with undisturbed simplicity, "Job shot the granny ; but he didn't let the people kill Major Lincoln."

"True, true," said Lionel, hastily—"I owe my life to you, and that debt shall be cancelled at every hazard. But why have you put yourself into the hands of your enemies so thoughtlessly? what brings you here to-night?"

"Ralph told me to come ; and if Ralph told Job to go into the king's parlor, he would go."

"Ralph !" exclaimed Lionel, stopping in his hurried walk across the room, "and where is he?"

"In the old ware-'us'; and he has sent me to tell you to come to him ; and what Ralph says must be done."

"He here too ! is the man crazed ?—would not his fears teach him——"

"Fears !" interrupted Job, with singular disdain—"you can't frighten Ralph ! The grannies couldn't frighten him, nor the light-infantry couldn't hit him, though he eat nothing but their smoke the whole day—Ralph's a proper warrior !"

"And he waits me, you say, in the tenement of your mother?"

"Job don't know what tenement means, but he's in the old ware-'us'."

"Come, then," said Lionel, taking his hat, "let us go to him—I must save him from the effects of his own rashness, though it cost my commission !"

He left the room while speaking, and the simpleton followed close at his heels, well content with having executed his mission without encountering any greater difficulties.

CHAPTER XII.

"This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna ;
Gonzago is the duke's name ; his wife, Baptista :
You shall see, anon ; 'tis a knavish piece of work,"

—*Hamlet.*

THE agitation and deep excitement produced by the events of the day had not yet subsided in the town, when Lionel found himself again in its narrow streets. Men passed swiftly by him, as if bent on some unusual and earnest business ; and more than once the young soldier

detected the triumphant smiles of the women, as they looked curiously out on the scene, from their half-open windows, and their eyes detected the professional trappings of his dress. Strong bodies of the troops were marching in different directions, and in a manner which denoted that the guards were strengthening, while the few solitary officers he met watched his approaching figure with cautious jealousy, as if they apprehended a dangerous enemy in every form they encountered.

The gates of Province-House were open, and, as usual, guarded by armed men. As Lionel passed leisurely along, he perceived that the grenadier to whom he had spoken on the preceding evening, again held his watch before the portal of the governor.

"Your experience did not deceive you, my old comrade," said Lionel, lingering a moment to address him—"we have had a warm day."

"So it is reported in the barracks, your honor," returned the soldier—"our company was not ordered out, and we are to stand double duty. I hope to God the next time there is anything to do, the grenadiers of the —th may not be left behind—it would have been for the credit of the army had they been in the field to-day."

"Why do you think so, my veteran? The men who were out are thought to have behaved well; but it was impossible to make head against a multitude in arms."

"It is not my place, your honor, to say, this man did well, and that man behaved amiss," returned the proud old soldier; "but when I hear of two thousand British troops turning their backs, or quickening their march, before all the rabble this country can muster, I want the flank companies of the —th to be at hand, if it should be only that I may say I have witnessed the disgraceful sight with my own eyes."

"There is no disgrace where there is no misconduct," said Lionel.

"There must have been misconduct somewhere, your honor, or such a thing could not have happened—consider, your honor, the very flower of the army! Something must have been wrong; and although I could see the latter part of the business from the hills, I can hardly believe it to be true." As he concluded, he shook his head, and continued his steady pace along his allotted ground, as if unwilling to pursue the humiliating subject any further. Lionel passed slowly on, musing on that deep-rooted prejudice,

which had even taught this humble menial of the crown to regard with contempt a whole nation, because they were believed to be dependents.

The Dock Square was stiller than usual, and the sounds of revelry, which it was usual to hear at that hour from the adjacent drinking-houses, were no longer audible. The moon had not yet risen, and Lionel passed under the dark arches of the market with a quick step, as he now remembered that one in whom he felt so deep an interest awaited his appearance. Job, who had followed in silence, glided by him on the drawbridge, and stood holding the door of the old building in his hand, when he reached its threshold. Lionel found the large space in the centre of the warehouse, as usual, dark and empty, though the dim light of a candle glimmered through the fissures in a partition, which separated an apartment, in one of the little towers that was occupied by Abigail Pray, from the ruder parts of the edifice. Low voices were also heard issuing from this room, and Major Lincoln, supposing he should find the old man and the mother of Job in conference together, turned to request the lad would precede him, and announce his name. But the changeling had also detected the whispering sounds, and it would seem with a more cunning ear, for he turned and darted through the door of the building with a velocity that did not abate until Lionel, who watched his movements with amazement, saw his shuffling figure disappear among the shambles of the market-place. Thus deserted by his guide, Lionel groped his way toward the place where he believed he should find the door which led into the tower. The light deceived him; for, as he approached it, his eye glanced through one of the crevices of the wall, and he again became an unintentional witness of another of those interviews, which evinced the singular and mysterious affinity between the fortunes of the affluent and respected Mrs. Lechmere and the miserable tenant of the warehouse. Until that moment, the hurry of events, and the crowd of reflections, which had rushed over the mind of the young man, throughout the busy time of the last twenty-four hours, had prevented his recalling the hidden meaning of the singular discourse of which he had already been an auditor. But now, when he found his aunt led into these haunts of beggary, by a feeling he was not weak enough to attribute to her charity, he stood rooted to the spot by a curiosity, which, at the same time that he found it irresistible, he was willing to excuse, under a

strong impression that these private communications were in some way connected with himself.

Mrs. Lechmere had evidently muffled her person in a manner that was intended to conceal this mysterious visit from any casual observer of her movements ; but the hoops of her large calash were now so far raised as to admit a distinct view of her withered features, and of the hard eye which shot forth its selfish, worldly glances, from amid the surrounding decay of nature. She was seated, both in indulgence to her infirmities, and from that assumption of superiority she never neglected in the presence of her inferiors, while her companion stood before her, in an attitude that partook more of restraint than of respect.

"Your weakness, foolish woman," said Mrs. Lechmere, in those stern, repulsive tones she so well knew how to use, when she wished to intimidate, "will yet prove your ruin. You owe it to respect for yourself, to your character, and even to your safety, that you should exhibit more firmness, and show yourself above this weak and idle superstition."

"My ruin ! and my character !" returned Abigail, looking about her with a haggard eye and a trembling lip ; "what is ruin, Madam Lechmere, if this poverty be not called so ? or what loss of character can bring upon me more biting scorn than I am now ordained to suffer for my sins ?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Lechmere, endeavoring to affect a kinder tone, though dislike was still too evident in her manner, "in the hurry of my grandnephew's reception, I have forgotten my usual liberality."

The woman took the piece of silver which Mrs. Lechmere slowly placed in her hand, and held it in her open palm for several moments, regarding it with a vacant look, which the other mistook for dissatisfaction.

"The troubles, and the decreasing value of property, have sensibly affected my income," continued the richly clad and luxurious Mrs. Lechmere ; "but if that should be too little for your immediate wants, I will add to it another crown."

"'Twill do—'twill do," said Abigail, clenching her hand over the money, with a grasp that was convulsive—"yes, yes, 'twill do. Oh ! Madam Lechmere, humbling and sinful as that wicked passion is, would to God that no motive worse than avarice had proved my ruin !"

Lionel thought his aunt cast an uneasy and embarrassed glance at her companion, which he construed into an expression that betrayed there were secrets even between these strange confidants ; but the momentary surprise exhibited in her features soon gave place to her habitual look of guarded and severe formality ; and she replied, with an air of coldness, as if she would repulse any approach to an acknowledgment of their common transgression—

“The woman talks like one who is beside herself ! Of what crime has she been guilty, but such as those to which our nature is liable !”

“True, true,” said Abigail Pray, with a half-stifled, hysterical laugh—“’tis our guilty, guilty nature, as you say. But I grow nervous, I believe, as I grow old and feeble, Madam Lechmere ; and I often forget myself. The sight of the grave, so very near, is apt to bring thoughts of repentance to such as are more hardened even than I.”

“Foolish girl !” said Mrs. Lechmere, endeavoring to screen her pallid features, by drawing down her calash, with a hand that trembled more with terror than with age ; “why should you speak thus freely of death, who are but a child ?”

Lionel heard the faltering, husky tones of his aunt, as they appeared to die in her throat, but nothing more was distinctly audible, until, after a long pause, she raised her face, and looked about her again with her severe, unbending eye, and continued—

“Enough of this folly, Abigail Pray—I have come to learn more of your strange inmate——”

“Oh ! ’tis not enough, Madam Lechmere,” interrupted the conscience-stricken woman ; “we have so little time left us for penitence and prayer, that there never can be enough, I fear, to answer our mighty transgressions. Let us speak of the grave, Madam Lechmere, while we can yet do it on this side of eternity.”

“Ay ! speak of the grave, while out of its damp cloisters ; ’tis the home of the aged,” said a third voice, whose hollow tones might well have issued from some tomb, “and I am here to join in the wholesome theme.”

“Who—who—in the name of God, who art thou ?” exclaimed Mrs. Lechmere, forgetting her infirmities, and her secret compunctions, in new emotions, and rising involuntarily from her seat ; “tell me, I conjure thee, who art thou ?”

"One, aged like thyself, Priscilla Lechmere, and standing on the threshold of that final home of which you would discourse. Speak on, then, ye widowed women ; for if ever ye have done aught that calls for forgiveness, 'tis in the grave ye shall find the heavenly gift of mercy offered to your unworthiness."

By changing the position of his body a little, Lionel was now enabled to command a view of the whole apartment. In the doorway stood Ralph, immovable in his attitude, with one hand raised high toward heaven, and the other pointing impressively downward, as if about to lay bare the secrets of that tomb, of which his wasted limbs, and faded lineaments, marked him as a fit tenant, while his searching eyeballs glared about him, from the face of one to the other, with that look of quickness and penetration, that Abigail Pray had so well described as "scorching." Within a few feet of the old man, Mrs. Lechmere remained standing, rigid and motionless as marble, her calash fallen back, and her death-like features exposed, with horror and astonishment rooted in every muscle, as, with open mouth, and eyes riveted on the intruder, she gazed as steadily as if placed in that posture by the chisel of the statuary. Abigail shaded her eyes with her hand, and buried her face in the folds of her garments, while strong convulsive shudderings ran through her frame, and betrayed the extent of the emotions she endeavored to conceal. Amazed at what he had witnessed, and concerned for the apparent insensibility of his aunt, whose great age rendered such scenes dangerous, Lionel was about to rush into the apartment, when Mrs. Lechmere so far recovered her faculties as to speak, and the young man lost every consideration in a burning curiosity, which was powerfully justified by his situation.

"Who is it that calls me by the name of Priscilla ? " said Mrs. Lechmere ; "none now live who can claim to be so familiar."

"Priscilla, Priscilla," repeated the old man, looking about him, as if he would require the presence of another ; "it is a soft and pleasant sound to my ears, and there is one that owns it besides thee, as thou knowest."

"She is dead ; years have gone by since I saw her in her coffin ; and I would forget her, and all like her, who have proved unworthy of my blood."

"She is *not* dead !" —shouted the old man, in a voice that rung through the naked rafters of the edifice like the

unearthly tones of some spirit of the air ; " she lives—she lives—ay ! she yet lives ! "

" Lives ! " repeated Mrs. Lechmere, recoiling a step before the forward movement of the other ; " why am I so weak as to listen ! ' tis impossible. "

" Lives ! " exclaimed Abigail Pray, clasping her hands with agony. " Oh ! would to God she did live ! but did I not see her a bloated, disfigured corpse ? did I not with these very hands place the grave-clothes about her once lovely frame ? Oh ! no—she is dead—dead—and I am a—— "

" 'Tis some madman that asserts these idle tales, " exclaimed Mrs. Lechmere, with a quickness that interrupted the criminal epithet the other was about to apply to herself. " The unfortunate girl is long since dead, as we know ; why should we reason with a maniac ? "

" Maniac ! " repeated Ralph, with an expression of the most taunting irony ; " no—no—no—such a one there is, as you and I well know, but ' tis not I who am mad—thou art rather crazed thyself, woman ; thou hast made one maniac already, wouldst thou make another ? "

" I ! " said Mrs. Lechmere, without quailing before the ardent look she encountered—" that God who bestows reason, recalls his gift at will ; ' tis not I who exercise such power. "

" How sayest thou, Priscilla Lechmere ? " cried Ralph, stepping with an inaudible tread so nigh as to grasp, unperceived, her motionless arm with his own wasted fingers : " yes—I will call thee Priscilla, little as thou deservest such a holy name—dost thou deny the power to craze—where, then, is the head of thy boasted race ? the proud baronet of Devonshire, the wealthy, and respected, and once happy companion of princes—thy nephew, Lionel Lincoln ? Is he in the halls of his fathers ?—leading the armies of his king ?—ruling and protecting his household ?—or is he the tenant of a gloomy cell ?—thou knowest he is—thou knowest he is—and, woman, thy vile machinations have placed him there ! "

" Who is it that dare thus speak to me ? " demanded Mrs. Lechmere, rallying her faculties with a mighty effort, to look down this charge—" if my unhappy nephew is indeed known to thee, thy own knowledge will refute this base accusation—— "

" Known to me ! I would ask what is hid from me ? I have looked at thee, and observed thy conduct, woman, for

the life of man ; and nothing that thou hast done is hid from me—I tell thee, I know all. Of this sinful woman here, also, I know all—have I not told thee, Abigail Pray, of thy most secret transgressions ? ”

“ Oh ! yes—yes ; he is indeed acquainted with what I had thought was now concealed from every eye but that of God ! ” cried Abigail, with superstitious terror.

“ Nor of thee am I ignorant, thou miserable widow of John Lechmere ; and of Priscilla, too, do I not know all ? — ”

“ All ! ” again exclaimed Abigail—

“ All ! ” repeated Mrs. Lechmere, in a voice barely audible ; when she sunk back in her chair, in a state of total insensibility. The breathless interest he felt in all that had passed, could detain Lionel no longer from rushing to the assistance of his aunt. Abigail Pray, who, it would seem, had been in some measure accustomed to such scenes with her lodger, retained, however, sufficient self-command to anticipate his motions ; and, when he had gained the door, he found her already supporting, and making the usual applications to Mrs. Lechmere. It became necessary to divest the sufferer of part of her attire, and Abigail, assuring Lionel of her perfect competency to act by herself, requested him to withdraw, not only on that account, but because she felt assured that nothing could prove more dangerous to her reviving patient, than his unexpected presence. After lingering a moment, until he witnessed the signs of returning life, Lionel complied with the earnest entreaties of the woman ; and, leaving the room, he groped his way to the foot of the ladder, with a determination to ascend to the apartment of Ralph, in order to demand at once an explanation of what he had just seen and heard. He found the old man seated in his little tower, his hand shading his eyes from the feeble light of the miserable candle, and his head drooping upon his bosom, like one in pensive musing. Lionel approached him, without appearing to attract his attention, and was compelled to speak, in order to announce his presence.

“ I have received your summons, by Job,” he said, “ and have obeyed it.”

“ ‘Tis well,” returned Ralph.

“ Perhaps I should add, that I have been an astonished witness of your interview with Mrs. Lechmere, and have heard the bold and unaccountable language you have seen proper to use to that lady.”

The old man now raised his head, and Lionel saw the bright rays from his eyes quicken, as he answered—

"You then heard the truth, and witnessed its effects on a guilty conscience."

"I also heard what you call the truth, in connection, as you know, with the names most dear to me."

"Art certain of it, boy?" returned Ralph, looking the other steadily in the face; "has no other become dearer to you, of late, than the authors of your being?—speak, and remember that you answer one of no common knowledge."

"What mean you, sir? is it in nature to love any as we do a parent?"

"Away with this childish simplicity," continued the other, sternly; "the grandchild of that wretched woman below—do you not love her, and can I put trust in thee?"

"What trust is there incompatible with affection for a being so pure as Cecil Dynevor?"

"Ay," murmured the old man in an undertone, "her mother *was* pure, and why may not the child be worthy of its parentage?" He paused, and a long, and, on the part of Lionel, a painful and embarrassing silence succeeded, which was at length broken by Ralph, who said, abruptly—"you were in the field to-day, Major Lincoln."

"Of that you must be certain, as I owe my life to your kind interposition. But why have you braved the danger of an arrest, by trusting your person in the power of the troops? Your presence and activity among the Americans must be known to many in the army besides myself."

"And would they think of searching for their enemies within the streets of Boston, when the hills without are filling with armed men? My residence in this building is known only to the woman below, who dare not betray me, her worthy son, and to you. My movements are secret and sudden, when men least expect them. Danger cannot touch such as I."

"But," said Lionel, hesitating with embarrassment, "ought I to conceal the presence of one whom I know to be inimical to my king?"

"Lionel Lincoln, you overrate your courage," interrupted Ralph, smiling in scorn—"you dare not shed the blood of him who has spared your own;—but enough of this—we understand each other, and one old as I should be a stranger to fear?"

"No, no," said a low, solemn voice, from a dark corner

of the apartment, where Job had stolen unseen, and was now nestled in security—"you can't frighten Ralph!"

"The boy is a worthy boy, and he knows good from evil; what more is necessary to man in this wicked world?" muttered Ralph, in those quick and indistinct tones that characterized his manner.

"Whence came you, fellow, and why did you abandon me so abruptly?" demanded Lionel.

"Job has just been into the market, to see if he couldn't find something that might be good for Nab," returned the lad.

"Think not to impose on me with this nonsense! Is food to be purchased at any hour of the night, though you had the means?"

"Now that is convincing the king's officers don't know every thing," said the simpleton, laughing within himself—"here's as good a pound bill, old tenor, as was ever granted by the Bay colony; and meat's no such rarity, that a man, who has a pound bill, old tenor, in his pocket, can't go under old Funnel when he pleases, for all their acts of Parliament."

"You have plundered the dead!" cried Lionel, observing that Job exhibited in his hand several pieces of silver, besides the note he had mentioned.

"Don't call Job a thief!" said the lad, with a threatening air; "there's law in the Bay yet, though the people don't use it; and right will be done to all, when the time comes. Job shot a granny, but he's no thief."

"You were then paid for your secret errand, last night; foolish boy; and have been tempted to run into danger by money. Let it be the last time—in future, when you want, come to me for assistance."

"Job won't go of a'r'nds for the king, if he'd give him his golden crown, with all its di'monds and flauntiness, unless Job pleases, for there's no law for it."

Lionel, with a view to appease the irritated lad, now made a few kind and conciliating remarks, but the changeling did not deign to reply, falling back in his corner in a sullen manner, as if he would repair the fatigue of the day by a few moments of sleep. In the meantime, Ralph had sunk into a profound reverie, when the young soldier remembered that the hour was late, and he had yet obtained no explanation of the mysterious charges. He therefore alluded to the subject in a manner which he thought best adapted to obtain the desired intelligence. The instant

Lionel mentioned the agitation of his aunt, his companion raised his head again, and a smile like that of fierce exultation lighted the wan face of the old man, who answered, pointing with an emphatic gesture to his own bosom—

"'Twas here, boy, 'twas here—nothing short of the power of conscience, and a knowledge like that of mine, could strike that woman speechless in the presence of anything human."

"But what is this extraordinary knowledge? I am in some degree the natural protector of Mrs. Lechmere; and, independent of my individual interest in your secret, have a right, in her behalf, to require an explanation of such serious allegations."

"In her behalf!" repeated Ralph. "Wait, impetuous young man, until she bids you push the inquiry—it shall then be answered, in a voice of thunder."

"If not in justice to my aged aunt, at least remember your repeated promises to unfold that sad tale of my own domestic sorrows, of which you claim to be the master."

"Ay, of that, and much more, am I in possession," returned the old man, smiling, as if conscious of his knowledge and power; "if you doubt it, descend and ask the miserable tenant of this warehouse—or the guilty widow of John Lechmere."

"Nay, I doubt nothing but my own patience; the moments fly swiftly, and I have yet to learn all I wish to know."

"This is neither the time, nor is it the place, where you are to hear the tale," returned Ralph; "I have already said that we shall meet beyond the colleges for that purpose."

"But after the events of this day, who can tell when it will be in the power of an officer of the crown to visit the colleges in safety?"

"What!" cried the old man, laughing aloud, in the bitterness of his scorn, "has the boy found the strength and the will of the despised colonists so soon! But I pledge to thee my word, that thou shalt yet see the place, and in safety.—Yes, yes, Priscilla Lechmere, thy hour is at hand, and thy doom is sealed forever!"

Lionel again mentioned his aunt, and alluded to the necessity of his soon rejoining her, as he already heard footsteps below, which indicated that preparations were making for her departure. But his petitions and remonstrances were now totally unheeded; his aged companion was pacing

swiftly up and down his small apartment, muttering incoherent sentences, in which the name of Priscilla was alone audible, and his countenance betraying the inward workings of absorbing and fierce passions. In a few moments more, the shrill voice of Abigail was heard calling upon her son, in a manner which plainly denoted her knowledge that the changeling was concealed somewhere about the building. Job heard her calls repeated, until the tones of her voice became angry and threatening, when he stole slowly from his corner, and moved toward the ladder, with a sunken brow and lingering steps. Lionel now knew not how to act. His aunt was still ignorant of his presence, and he thought if Abigail Pray had wished him to appear, he would in some manner be soon included in the summons. He had also his own secret reasons for wishing his visits to Ralph unknown. Accordingly, he determined to watch the movements below, under the favor of the darkness, and to be governed entirely by circumstances. He took no leave of his companion on departing, for long use had so far accustomed him to the eccentric manner of the old man, that he well knew any attempt to divert his attention from his burning thoughts, would be futile at a moment of such intense excitement.

From the head of the ladder, where Lionel took his stand, he saw Mrs. Lechmere, preceded by Job with a lantern, walking, with a firmer step than he could have hoped for, toward the door, and he overheard Abigail cautioning her wilful son to light her visitor to a neighboring corner, where it appeared a conveyance was in waiting. On the threshold, his aunt turned, and, the light from the candle of Abigail falling on her features, Lionel caught a full view of her cold, hard eye, which had regained all its worldly expression, though softened a little by a deeper shade of thought than usual.

"Let the scene of to-night be forgotten, my good Abigail," she said. "Your lodger is a nameless being, who has gleaned some idle tale, and wishes to practise on our credulity to enrich himself. I will consider more of it; but on no account do you hold any further communion with him—I must remove you, my trusty woman; this habitation is unworthy of you, and of your dutiful son, too—I must see you better lodged, my good Abigail, indeed I must."

Lionel could distinguish the slight shudder that passed through the frame of her companion, as she alluded to

the doubtful character of Ralph ; but, without answering, Abigail held the door open for the departure of her guest. The instant Mrs. Lechmere disappeared, Lionel glided down the ladder, and stood before the astonished woman.

"When I tell you I have heard all that passed to-night," he abruptly said, "you will see the folly of any further attempt at concealment—I now demand so much of your secret as affects the happiness of me or mine."

"No—no—not of me, Major Lincoln," said the terrified female—"not, of me, for the love of God, not of me—I have sworn to keep it, and one oath——" Her emotions choked her, and her voice became indistinct.

Lionel regretted his vehemence, and, ashamed to extort a confession from a woman, he attempted to pacify her feelings, promising to require no further communication at that time.

"Go—go"—she said, motioning him to depart, "and I shall be well again—leave me, and then I shall be alone with that terrible old man, and my God!"

Perceiving her earnestness, he reluctantly complied, and, meeting Job on the threshold, he ceased to feel any further uneasiness for her safety.

During his rapid walk to Tremont Street, Major Lincoln thought intently on all he had heard and witnessed. He remembered the communications by which Ralph had attained such a powerful interest in his feelings, and he fancied he could discover a pledge of the truth of the old man's knowledge in the guilt betrayed by the manner of his aunt. From Mrs. Lechmere his thoughts recurred to her lovely grandchild, and for a moment he was perplexed, by endeavoring to explain her contradictory deportment toward himself ;—at one time she was warm, frank, and even affectionate ; and at another, as in the short and private interview of that very evening, cold, constrained, and repulsive. Then, again, he recollected the object which had chiefly induced him to follow his regiment to his native country ; and the recollection was attended by that shade of dejection which such reflections never failed to cast across his intelligent features. On reaching the house, he ascertained the safe return of Mrs. Lechmere, who had already retired to her room, attended by her lovely relatives. Lionel immediately followed their example ; and as the excitement of that memorable and busy day subsided, it was succeeded by a deep sleep, and fell on his senses like the forgetfulness of the dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Now let it work : Mischief, thou art afoot :
Take thou what course thou wilt !"—SHAKESPEARE.

THE alarm of the inroad passed swiftly by the low shores of the Atlantic, and was heard echoing among the rugged mountains west of the rivers, as if borne along on a whirlwind. The male population, between the rolling waters of Massachusetts Bay and the limpid stream of the Connecticut, rose as one man ; and as the cry of blood was sounded far inland, the hills and valleys, the highways and footpaths, were seen covered with bands of armed husbandmen, pressing eagerly toward the scene of the war. Within eight-and-forty hours after the fatal meeting at Lexington, it was calculated that more than a hundred thousand men were in arms ; and near one-fourth of that number was gathered before the peninsulas of Boston and Charlestown. They who were precluded by distance, and a want of military provisions, to support such a concourse, from participating in the more immediate contest, lay by in expectation of the arrival of that moment when their zeal might also be put to severer trials. In short, the sullen quietude, in which the colonies had been slumbering for a year, was suddenly and rudely broken by the events of that day ; and the patriotic among the people rose with such a cry of indignation on their lips, that the disaffected, who were no insignificant class in the more southern provinces, were compelled to silence, until the first burst of revolutionary excitement had an opportunity to subside, under the never-failing influence of time and suffering.

Gage, secure in his positions, and supported by a constantly increasing power, as well as the presence of a formidable fleet, looked on the gathering storm with a steady eye, and with that calmness which distinguished the mild benevolence of his private character. Though the attitude and the intentions of the Americans could no longer be mistaken, he listened with reluctant ears to the revengeful advice of his counsellors, and rather strove to appease the tumult, than to attempt crushing it by a force, which, though a month before it had been thought equal to the united power of the peaceful colonists, he now prudently deemed no more than competent to protect itself within its

watery boundaries. Proclamations were, however, fulminated against the rebels; and such other measures as were thought indispensable to assert the dignity and authority of the crown, were promptly adopted. Of course, these harmless denunciations were disregarded, and all his exhortations to return to an allegiance, which the people still denied had ever been impaired, were lost amid the din of arms, and the popular cries of the time. These appeals of the British general, as well as sundry others, made by the royal governors, who yet held their rule throughout all the provinces, except the one in which the scene of our tale is laid, were answered by the people in humble, but manly petitions to the throne for justice; and in loud remonstrances to the Parliament, requiring to be restored to the possession of those rights and immunities, which should be secured to all who enjoyed the protection of their common constitution. Still the power and prerogatives of the prince were deeply respected, and were alluded to in all public documents, with the veneration which was thought due to the sacredness of his character and station. But that biting, though grave sarcasm, which the colonists knew so well how to use, was freely expended on his ministers, who were accused of devising the measures so destructive to the peace of the empire. In this manner passed some weeks after the series of skirmishes which were called the battle of Lexington, from the circumstance of commencing at the hamlet of that name, both parties continuing to prepare for a mightier exhibition of their power and daring.

Lionel had by no means been an unconcerned spectator of these preparations. The morning after the return of the detachment, he applied for a command equal to his just expectations. But while he was complimented on the spirit and loyalty he had manifested on the late occasion, it was intimated to the young man that he might be of more service to the cause of his prince by devoting his time to the cultivation of his interest among those powerful colonists with whom his family was allied by blood, or connected by long and close intimacies. It was even submitted to his own judgment whether it would not be well, at some auspicious moment, to trust his person without the defences of the army, in the prosecution of this commendable design. There was so much that was flattering to the self-love, and soothing to the pride of the young soldier, artfully mingled with these ambiguous proposals,

that he became content to await the course of events, having, however, secured a promise of obtaining a suitable military command in the case of further hostilities. That such an event was at hand, could not well be concealed from one much less observing than Major Lincoln.

Gage had already abandoned his temporary position in Charlestown, for the sake of procuring additional security by concentrating his force. From the hills of the peninsula of Boston, it was apparent that the colonists were fast assuming the front of men who were resolved to beleaguer the army of the king. Many of the opposite heights were already crowned with hastily-formed works of earth, and a formidable body of these unpractised warriors had set themselves boldly down before the entrance to the isthmus, cutting off all communication with the adjacent country, and occupying the little village of Roxbury, directly before the muzzles of the British guns, with a hardness that would not have disgraced men much longer tried in the field, and more inured to its dangers.

The surprise created in the army by these appearances of skill and spirit among the hitherto despised Americans, in some measure ceased when the rumor spread itself in their camp that many gentlemen of the provinces, who had served with credit in the forces of the crown, at former periods, were mingled with the people in stations of responsibility and command. Among others Lionel heard the names of Ward and Thomas; men of liberal attainments, and of some experience in arms. Both were regularly commissioned by the congress of the colony as leaders of their forces; and under their orders were numerous regiments duly organized; possessing all the necessary qualifications of soldiers, excepting the two indispensable requisites of discipline and arms. Lionel heard the name of Warren mentioned oftener than any other in the circles of Province-House, and with the sort of bitterness, which, even while it bespoke their animosity, betrayed the respect of his enemies. This gentleman, who until the last moment, had braved the presence of the royal troops, and fearlessly advocated his principles, while encircled with their bayonets, was now known to have suddenly disappeared from among them, abandoning home, property, and a lucrative profession; and by sharing in the closing scenes of the day of Lexington, to have fairly cast his fortunes on the struggle. But the name which in secret possessed the greatest charm for the ear of the young British soldier,

was that of Putnam, a yeoman of the neighboring colony of Connecticut, who, as the uproar of the alarm whirled by him, literally deserted his plough, and mounting a beast from its team, made an early halt, after a forced march of a hundred miles, in the foremost ranks of his countrymen. While the name of this sturdy American was passing in whispers among the veterans who crowded the levees of Gage, a flood of melancholy and tender recollections flashed through the brain of the young man. He remembered the frequent and interesting communications which, in his boyhood, he had held with his own father, before the dark shade had passed across the reason of Sir Lionel, and, in every tale of murderous combats with the savage tenants of the wilds, in each scene of danger and of daring that had distinguished the romantic warfare of the wilderness, and even in strange and fearful encounters with the beasts of the forest, the name of this man was blended with a species of chivalrous fame that is seldom obtained in an enlightened age, and never undeservedly. The great wealth of the family of Lincoln, and the high expectations of its heir, had obtained for the latter a military rank which at that period was rarely enjoyed by any but such as had bought the distinction by long and arduous services. Consequently, many of his equals had shared in those trials of his father, in which the 'Lion heart' of America had been so conspicuous for his deeds. By these grave veterans, who should know him best, the name of Putnam was always mentioned with strong and romantic affection; and when the notable scheme of detaching him, by the promise of office and wealth, from the cause of the colonists was proposed by the cringing counsellors who surrounded the commander-in-chief, it was listened to with a contemptuous incredulity by the former associates of the old partisan, that the result of the plan fully justified. Similar inducements were offered to others among the Americans, whose talents were thought worthy of purchase; but so deep root had the principles of the day taken, that not a man was found to listen to the proposition.

While these subtle experiments were adopted in the room of more energetic measures, troops continued to arrive from England, and, before the end of May, many leaders of renown appeared in the councils of Gage, who now possessed a disposable force of not less than eight thousand bayonets. With the appearance of these reinforcements, the fallen pride of the army began to revive, and

the spirits of the haughty young men, who had so recently left the gay parades of their boasted island, were chafed by the reflection that such an army should be cooped within the narrow limits of the peninsula by a band of half-armed husbandmen, destitute alike of the knowledge of war, and of most of its munitions. This feeling was increased by the taunts of the Americans themselves, who now turned the tables on their adversaries, applying, among other sneers, the term of "elbow-room" freely to Burgoyne, one of those chieftains of the royal army, who had boasted unwittingly of the intention of himself and his compeers to widen the limits of the army immediately on their arrival at the scene of the contest. The aspect of things within the British camp began to indicate, however, that their leaders were serious in the intention to extend their possessions, and all eyes were again turned to the heights of Charlestown, the spot most likely to be first occupied.

No military positions could be more happily situated, as respects locality; to support each other, and to extend and weaken the lines of their enemies, than the two opposite peninsulas so often mentioned. The distance between them was but six hundred yards, and the deep and navigable waters, by which they were nearly surrounded, rendered it easy for the royal general to command, at any time, the assistance of the heaviest vessels of the fleet, in defending either place. With these advantages before them, the army gladly heard those orders issued, which, it was well understood, indicated an approaching movement to the opposite shores.

It was now eight weeks since the commencement of hostilities, and the war had been confined to the preparations detailed, with the exception of one or two sharp skirmishes on the islands of the harbor, between the foragers of the army, and small parties of the Americans; in which the latter well maintained their newly acquired reputation for spirit.

With the arrival of the regiments from England gayety had once more visited the town, though such of the inhabitants as were compelled to remain against their inclinations, continued to maintain that cold reserve, in their deportment, which effectually repelled all the efforts of the officers to include them in the wanton festivities of the time. There were a few, however, among the colonists, who had been bribed, by offices and emoluments, to desert

the good cause of the land ; and 'as some of these had already been rewarded by offices which gave them access to the ear of the royal governor, he was thought to be unduly and unhappily influenced by the pernicious counsels with which they poisoned his mind, and prepared him for acts of injustice and harshness, that both his unbiassed feelings and ordinary opinions would have condemned. A few days succeeding the affair of Lexington, a meeting of the inhabitants had been convened, and a solemn compact was made between them and the governor, that such as chose to deliver up their arms might leave the place, while the remainder were promised a suitable protection in their own dwellings. The arms were delivered, but that part of the conditions which related to the removal of the inhabitants was violated under slight and insufficient pretexts. This, and various other causes incidental to military rule, imbittered the feelings of the people, and furnished new causes of complaint ; while, on the other hand, hatred was rapidly usurping the place of contempt, in the breasts of those who had been compelled to change their sentiments with respect to a people that they could never love. In this manner, resentment and distrust existed, with all the violence of personality, within the place itself, affording an additional reason to the troops for wishing to extend their limits. Notwithstanding these inauspicious omens of the character of the contest, the native kindness of Gage, and perhaps a desire to rescue a few of his own men from the hands of the colonists, induced him to consent to an exchange of the prisoners made in the inroad ; thus establishing, in the outset, a precedent to distinguish the controversy from an ordinary rebellion against the loyal authority of the sovereign. A meeting was held, for this purpose, in the village of Charlestown, at that time unoccupied by either army. At the head of the American deputation appeared Warren, and the old partisan of the wilderness already mentioned, who, by a happy, though not uncommon constitution of temperament, was as forward in deeds of charity as in those of daring. At this interview, several of the veterans of the royal army were present, having passed the strait to hold a last, friendly converse with their ancient comrade, who received them with the frankness of a soldier, while he rejected their subtle endeavors to entice him from the banners under which he had enlisted, with a sturdiness as unpretending as it was inflexible.

While these events were occurring at the great scene of the contest, the hum of preparation was to be heard throughout the whole of the wide extent of the colonies. In various places slight acts of hostility were committed, the Americans no longer waiting for the British to be the aggressors, and everywhere such military stores as could be reached, were seized, peaceably or by violence, as the case required. The concentration of most of the troops in Boston, had, however, left the other colonies comparatively but little to achieve, though, while they still rested, nominally, under the dominion of the crown, they neglected no means within their power to assert their rights in the last extremity.

At Philadelphia "the Congress of the Delegates from the United Colonies," the body that controlled the great movements of a people, who now first began to act as a distinct nation, issued their manifestoes, supporting, in a masterly manner, their principles, and proceeded to organize an army that should be as competent to maintain them as circumstances would allow. Gentlemen who had been trained to arms in the service of the king, were invited to resort to their banners, and the remainder of the vacancies were filled by the names of the youthful, the bold, and adventurous, who were willing to risk their lives in a cause where even success promised so little personal advantage. At the head of this list of untrained warriors, the congress placed one of their own body, a man already distinguished for his services in the field, and who has since bequeathed to his country the glory of an untarnished name.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Thou shalt meet me at Philippi."—*Julius Cæsar.*

DURING this period of feverish excitement, while the appearance and privations of war existed with so little of its danger or its action, Lionel had not altogether forgotten his personal feelings, in the powerful interest created by the state of public affairs. Early on the morning succeeding the night of the scene between Mrs. Lechmere and the inmates of the warehouse, he had repaired again to the spot, to relieve the intense anxiety of his mind, by seeking a complete explanation of all those mysteries, which had

been the principal ligament that bound him to a man, little known, except for his singularities.

The effects of the preceding day's battle were already visible in the market-place, where, as Lionel passed, he saw few or none of the countrymen, who usually crowded the square at that hour. In fact, the windows of the shops were opened with caution, and men looked out upon the face of the sun, as if doubting of its appearance and warmth, as in seasons of ordinary quiet; jealousy and distrust having completely usurped the place of security within the streets of the town. Notwithstanding the hour, few were in their beds, and those who appeared betrayed by their looks that they had passed the night in watchfulness. Among this number was Abigail Pray, who received her guest in her little tower, surrounded by everything as he had seen it on the past evening, nothing altered, except her own dark eye, which at times looked like a gem of price set in her squalid features, but which now appeared haggard and sunken, participating, more markedly than common, in the general air of misery that pervaded the woman.

"I have intruded at a somewhat unusual hour, Mrs. Pray," said Lionel, as he entered; "but business of the last moment requires that I should see your lodger—I suppose he is above; it will be well to announce my visit."

Abigail shook her head with an air of solemn meaning, as she answered in a subdued voice, "He is gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed Lionel—"whither, and when?"

"The people seem visited by the wrath of God, sir;" returned the woman—"old and young, the sick and well, are crazy about the shedding of blood; and it's beyond the might of man to say where the torrent will be stayed!"

"But what has this to do with Ralph? where is he? Woman, you are not playing me false?"

"I! heaven forbid that I should ever be false again! and to you least of all God's creatures! No, no, Major Lincoln; the wonderful man, who seems to have lived so long that he can even read our secret thoughts, as I had supposed man could never read them, has left me, and I know not whether he will ever return."

"Ever! you have not driven him by violence from under your miserable roof?"

"My roof is like that of the fowls of the air—'tis the roof of any who are so unfortunate as to need it.—There is

no spot on earth, Major Lincoln, that I can call mine—but one day there will be one—yes, yes, there will be a narrow house provided for us all; and God grant that mine may be as quiet as the coffin is said to be! I lie not, Major Lincoln—no, this time I am innocent of deceit—Ralph and Job have gone together, but whither, I know not, unless it be to join the people without the town—they left me as the moon rose, and he gave me a parting and a warning voice, that will ring in my ears until they are deafened by the damps of the grave!”

“Gone to join the Americans, and with Job!” returned Lionel, musing, and without attending to the closing words of Abigail.—“Your boy will purchase peril with this madness, Mrs. Pray, and should be looked to.”

“Job is not one of God’s accountables, nor is he to be treated like other children,” returned the woman. “Ah! Major Lincoln, a healthier, and a stouter, and a finer boy was not to be seen in the Bay province, till the child had reached his fifth year! then, then it was that the judgment of heaven fell on mother and son—sickness made him what you see, a being with the form, but without the reason of man, and I have grown the wretch I am. But it has all been foretold, and warnings enough have I had of it all! for is it not said, that *He* ‘will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children until the third and fourth generation?’ Thank God, my sorrows and sins will end with Job, for there never can be a third to suffer!”

“If,” said Lionel, “there be any sin which lies heavy at your heart, every consideration, whether of justice or repentance, should induce you to confess your errors to those whose happiness may be affected by the knowledge, if any such there be.”

The anxious eye of the woman raised itself to meet the look of the young man; but, quailing before the piercing gaze it encountered, she quickly turned it upon the litter and confusion of her disordered apartment. Lionel waited some time for a reply, but finding that she remained obstinately silent, he continued—

“From what has already passed, you must be conscious that I have good reason to believe, that my feelings are deeply concerned in your secret; make, then, your confession of the guilt which seems to bear you down so heavily; and in return for the confidence, I promise you my forgiveness and protection.”

As Lionel pressed thus directly the point so near his

heart, the woman shrunk away from her situation near him, and her countenance lost, as he proceeded, its remarkable expression of compunction, in a forced look of deep surprise, that showed she was no novice in dissimulation, whatever might be the occasional warnings of her conscience.

"Guilt!" she repeated, in a slow and tremulous voice; "we are all guilty, and would be lost creatures, but for the blood of the Mediator."

"Most true; but you have spoken of crimes that infringe the laws of man, as well as those of God."

"I! Major Lincoln—I a disorderly law-breaker?" exclaimed Abigail, affecting to busy herself in arranging her apartment—"it is not such as I, that have leisure or courage to break the laws! Major Lincoln is trying a poor lone woman, to make his jokes with the gentlemen of his mess this evening—'tis certain we all of us have our burdens of guilt to answer for—surely Major Lincoln couldn't have heard minister Hunt preach his sermon, the last Sabbath, on the sins of the town!"

Lionel colored highly at the artful imputation of the woman, that he was practising on her sex and unprotected situation; and, greatly provoked, in secret, at her duplicity, he became more guarded in his language, endeavoring to lead her on, by kindness and soothing, to the desired communications. But all his ingenuity was met by more than equal abilities on the part of Abigail, from whom he only obtained expressions of surprise, that he could have mistaken her language for more than the usual acknowledgment of errors, that are admitted to be common to our lost nature. In this particular, the woman was in no respect singular; the greater number of those, who are loudest in their confessions and denunciations on the abandoned nature of our hearts, commonly resenting, in the deepest manner, the imputation of individual offences. The more earnest and pressing his inquiries became, the more wary she grew, until, disgusted with her pertinacity, and secretly suspecting her of foul play with her lodger, he left the house in anger, determining to keep a close eye on her movements, and, at a suitable moment, to strike such a blow as should bring her not only to confession, but to shame.

Under the influence of this momentary resentment, and unable to avoid harboring the most unpleasant suspicions of his aunt, the young man determined, that very morning

to withdraw himself entirely, as a guest, from her dwelling. Mrs. Lechmere, who, if she knew at all that Lionel had been a witness of her intercourse with Ralph, must have received the intelligence from Abigail, received him, at breakfast, with a manner that betrayed no such consciousness. She listened to his excuses for removing, with evident concern; and more than once, as Lionel spoke of the probable nature of his future life, now that hostilities had commenced—the additional trouble his presence would occasion to one of her habits and years—of his great concern in her behalf—and, in short, of all that he could devise in the way of apology for the step, he saw her eyes turned anxiously on Cecil with an expression which, at another time, might have led him to distrust the motives of her hospitality. The young lady, herself, however, evidently heard the proposal with great satisfaction, and, when her grandmother appealed to her opinion, whether he had urged a single good reason for the measure, she answered with a vivacity that had been a stranger to her manner of late—

“Certainly, my dear grandmamma—the best of all reasons—his inclinations. Major Lincoln tires of us, and of our humdrum habits, and—and in my eyes, true politeness requires, that we should suffer him to leave us for his barracks, without a word of remonstrance.”

“My motive must be greatly mistaken, if a desire to leave you——”

“Oh! sir, the explanation is not required. You have urged so many reasons, cousin Lionel, that the true and moving motive is yet kept behind the curtain. It must, and can be no other than *ennui*.”

“Then I will remain,” said Lionel; “for anything is better than to be suspected of insensibility.”

Cecil looked both gratified and disappointed—she played with her spoon a moment in embarrassment, bit her beautiful lip with vexation, and then said, in a more friendly tone—

“I must then exonerate you from the imputation. Go to your own quarters, if it be agreeable, and we will believe your incomprehensible reasons for the change—besides, as a kinsman, we shall see you every day, you know.”

Lionel had now no longer any excuse for not abiding by his avowed determination; and, notwithstanding Mrs. Lechmere parted from her interesting nephew with an

exhibition of reluctance that was in singular contrast with her usually cold and formal manner, the desired removal was made in the course of that very morning.

When this change was accomplished, week after week slipped by, in the manner related in the preceding chapter, during which the reinforcements continued to arrive, and general after general appeared in the place to support the unenterprising Gage in the conduct of the war. The timid amongst the colonists were appalled as they heard the long list of proud and boasted names recounted. There was Howe, a man sprung from a noble race, long known for their deeds in arms, and whose chief had already shed his blood on the soil of America—Clinton, another cadet of an illustrious house, better known for his personal intrepidity and domestic kindness, than for the rough qualities of the warrior—and the elegant and accomplished Burgoyne, who had already purchased a name in the fields of Portugal and Germany, which he was destined soon to lose in the wilds of America. In addition to these might be mentioned Pigot, Grant, Robertson, and the heir of Northumberland, each of whom led a brigade in the cause of his prince; besides a host of men of lesser note, who had passed their youth in arms, and were now about to bring their experience to the field, in opposition to the untrained husbandmen of the plains of New England. As if this list were not sufficient to overwhelm their inexperienced adversaries, the pride of arms had gathered many of the young among the noble and chivalric in the British empire, to the point on which all eyes were turned; amongst whom the one who afterward added the fairest wreath to the laurels of his ancestors, was the joint heir of Hastings and Moira, the gallant, but, as yet, untried boy of Rawdon. Amongst such companions, many of whom had been his associates in England, the hours of Lionel passed swiftly by, leaving him but little leisure to meditate on those causes which had brought him also to the scene of contention.

One warm evening, toward the middle of June, Lionel became a witness of the following scene, through the open doors which communicated between his private apartment and the room which Polwarth had dedicated to what he called "the knowing mess." M'Fuse was seated at a table, with a ludicrous air of magisterial authority, while Polwarth held a station at his side, which appeared to partake of the double duties of a judge and a scribe. Before this formidable tribunal Seth Sage was arraigned, as it would

seem, to answer for certain offences alleged to have been committed in the field of battle. Ignorant that his landlord had not received the benefit of the late exchange, and curious to know what all the suppressed roguery he could detect in the demure countenances of his friends might signify, Lionel dropped his pen, and listened to the succeeding dialogue.

"Now answer to your offences, thou silly fellow, with a wise name," M'Fuse commenced, in a voice that did not fail, by its harsh cadences, to create some of that awe, which, by the expression of the speaker's eye, it would seem he labored to produce—"speak out with the freedom of a man, and the compunctions of a Christian, if you have them. Why should I not send you at once to Ireland, that ye may get your deserts on three pieces of timber, the one being laid cross-wise for the sake of convenience? If you have a contrary reason, bestow it without delay, for the love you bear your own angular daiformities."

The wags did not altogether fail in their object, Seth betraying a good deal more uneasiness than it was usual for the man to exhibit even in situations of uncommon peril. After clearing his throat, and looking about him, to gather from the eyes of the spectators which way their sympathies inclined, he answered with a very commendable fortitude—

"Because it's ag'in all law."

"Have done with your interminable perplexities of the law," cried M'Fuse, "and do not bother honest gentlemen with its knavery, as if they were no more than so many proctors in big wigs! 'tis the gospel you should be thinking of, you godless reprobate, on account of that final end you will yet make, one day, in a most indecent hurry."

"To your purpose, Mac," interrupted Polwarth, who perceived that the erratic feelings of his friend were beginning already to lead him from the desired point; "or I will propound the matter myself, in a style that would do credit to a mandamus counsellor."

"The mandamuses are all ag'in the charter, and the law too," continued Seth, whose courage increased as the dialogue bore more directly upon his political principles—"and to my mind it's quite convincing, that if ministers calculate largely on upholding them, there will be great disturbances, if not a proper fight in the land; for the whole country is in a blaze!"

"Disturbances, thou immovable iniquity! thou quiet assassin!" roared M'Fuse; "do ye not call a light of a day a disturbance?—or do ye tarm skulking behind fences, and laying the muzzle of a musket on the head of Job Pray, and the breech on a mullein-stalk, while ye draw upon a fellow-creature, a commendable method of fighting? Now answer me to the truth, and disdain all lying, as ye would 'ating anything but cod on a Saturday, who were the two men that fired into my very countenance, from the unfortunate situation among the mulleins that I have detailed to you?"

"Pardon me, Captain M'Fuse," said Polwarth, "if I say that your zeal and indignation run ahead of your discretion. If we alarm the prisoner in this manner, we may defeat the ends of justice. Besides, sir, there is a reflection contained in your language, to which I must dissent. A real *dumb* is not to be despised, especially when served up in wrapper, and between two coarser fish, to preserve the steam—I have had my private meditations on the subject of getting up a Saturday's club, in order to enjoy the bounty of the Bay, and for improving the cookery of the cod!"*

"And let me tell you, Captain Polwarth," returned the grenadier, cocking his eye fiercely at the other, "that your epicurean propensities lead you to the verge of cannibalism; for sure it may be called *that*, when you speak of 'ating, while the life of a fellow-cr'ature is under a discussion for its termination——"

"I conclude," interrupted Seth, who was greatly averse to all quarrelling, and who thought he saw the symptoms of a breach between his judges, "the captain wishes to know who the two men were that fired on him a short time before he got the hit in the shoulder?"

"A short time, ye marvellous hypocrite!—'twas as quick as pop and slap could make it."

"Perhaps there might be some mistake, for a great many of the troops were much disguised——"

"Do ye insinuate that I got drunk before the enemies of

* NOTE.—It may be a fit matter of inquiry for the antiquarian, to learn whether the captain ever put his project in execution; and, if so, whether he has not the merit of founding that famous association, which, to this hour, maintains the Catholic custom of the east, by feasting on the last day of the week on the staple of New England; and which is said to assemble regularly, with much good-fellowship, around more good wine than is ever encountered at any other board in the known world.

my king?" roared the grenadier—"Harkye, Master Sage; I ask you in a genteel way, who the two men were that fired on me, in the manner detailed; and remember that a man may tire of putting questions which are never answered."

"Why," returned Seth, who, however expert at prevarication, eschewed, with religious horror, a direct lie—"I pretty much conclude that they—the captain is sure the place he means was just beyond Menotomy?"

"As sure as men can be," said Polwarth, "who possess the use of their eyes."

"Then Captain Polwarth can give testimony to the fact?"

"I believe Major Lincoln's horse carries a small bit of your lead to this moment, Master Sage."

Seth yielded to this accumulation of evidence against him; and knowing, moreover, that the grenadier had literally made him a prisoner in the fact of renewing his fire, he sagaciously determined to make a merit of necessity, and candidly to acknowledge his agency in inflicting the wounds. The utmost, however, that his cautious habits would permit him to say, was—

"Seeing there can't well be any mistake, I seem to think the two men were chiefly Job and I."

"Chaffly, you lath of uncertainty!" exclaimed M'Fuse; "if there was any chaff in that cowardly assassination of wounding a Christian, and of also hurting a horse—which, though nothing but a dumb baste, has better blood than runs in your own beggarly veins—'twas your own ugly proportions. But I rejoice that you have come to the confessional! I can now see you hung with felicity—if you have anything to say, urge it at once, why I should not embark you for Ireland by the first vessel, in a letter to my lord-lieutenant, with a request that he'll give you an early procession, and a dacent funeral."

Seth belonged to a class of his countrymen, amongst whom, while there was a superabundance of ingenuity, there was literally no joke. Deceived by the appearance of anger, which had in reality blended with the assumed manner of the grenadier, as he dwelt upon the irritating subject of his own injuries, the belief of the prisoner in the sacred protection of the laws became much shaken, and he began to reflect very seriously on the insecurity of the times, as well as on the despotic nature of the military power. The little humor he had inherited from his puritan

ancestors, was, though exceedingly quaint, altogether after a different fashion from the off-hand, blundering wit of the Irishman; and that manner which he did not possess, he could not entirely comprehend, so that, as far as a very visible alarm furthered the views of the two conspirators, they were quite successful. Polwarth now took pity on his evident embarrassment, and observed, with a careless manner—

“Perhaps I can make a proposal, by which Mr. Sage may redeem his neck from the halter, and at the same time essentially serve an old friend.”

“Hear ye that, thou confounder of men and bastes!” cried M’Fuse—“down on your knees, and thank Mr. Paiter Polwarth for the charity of his insinuation.”

Seth was not displeased to hear such amicable intentions announced; but, habitually cautious in all bargaining, he suppressed the exhibition of his satisfaction, and said, with an air of deliberation that would have done credit to the keenest trader in King Street—that “he should like to hear the terms of the agreement, before he gave his conclusion.”

“They are simply these,” returned Polwarth—“you shall receive your passports and freedom to-night, on condition that you sign this bond, whereby you will become obliged to supply our mess, as usual, during the time the place is invested, with certain articles of food and nourishment, as herein set forth, and according to the prices mentioned, which the veriest Jew in Duke’s Place would pronounce to be liberal. Here; take the instrument, and ‘read, and mark,’ in order that we may ‘inwardly digest.’”

Seth took the paper, and gave it that manner of investigation that he was wont to bestow on everything which affected his pecuniary interests. He objected to the price of every article, all of which were altered in compliance with his obstinate resistance; and he moreover insisted, that a clause should be inserted to exonerate him from the penalty, provided the intercourse should be prohibited by the authorities of the colony; after which he continued—

“If the captain will agree to take charge of the things, and become liable, I will conclude to make the trade.”

“Here is a fellow who wants boot in a bargain for his life!” cried the grenadier; “but we will humor his covetous inclinations, Polly, and take charge of the chattels. Captain Polwarth and myself pledge our words to their safe-keeping. Let me run my eyes over the articles,” con-

tinued the grenadier, looking very gravely at the several covenants of the bond—"faith, Paiter, you have bargained for a goodly larder! Baif, mutton, pigs, turnips, potatoes, melons, and other fruits—there's a blunder, now, that would keep an English mess on a grin for a month, if an Irishman had made it! as if a melon was a fruit, and a potato was not! The devil a word do I see that you have said about a mouthful, except aitable, either! Here, fellow, clap your learning to it, and I'll warrant you we yet get a meal out of it, in some manner or other."

"Wouldn't it be as well to put the last agreement in the writings, too," said Seth, "in case of accidents?"

"Hear how a knave halters himself!" cried M'Fuse; "he has the individual honor of two captains of foot, and is willing to exchange it for their joint bond! The request is too reasonable to be denied, Polly, and we should be guilty of pecuniary suicide to reject it; so place a small article at the bottom, explanatory of the mistake the gentleman has fallen into."

Polwarth did not hesitate to comply, and in a very few minutes everything was arranged to the perfect satisfaction of the parties; the two soldiers felicitating themselves on the success of a scheme which seemed to avert the principal evils of the leaguer from their own mess; and Seth finding no difficulty in complying with an agreement, which was likely to prove so profitable, however much he doubted its validity in a court of justice. The prisoner was now declared at liberty, and was advised to make his way out of the place, with as little noise as possible, and under favor of the pass he held. Seth gave the bond a last and most attentive perusal, and then departed, well contented to abide by its conditions, and not a little pleased to escape from the grenadier, the expression of whose half-comic, half-serious eye, occasioned him more perplexity than any other subject which had ever before occupied his astuteness. After the disappearance of the prisoner, the two worthies repaired to their nightly banquet, laughing heartily at the success of their notable invention.

Lionel suffered Seth to pass from the room, without speaking; but, as the man left his own abode with a lingering and doubtful step, the young soldier followed him into the street, without communicating to any one that he had witnessed what had passed, with the laudable intention of adding his own personal pledge for the security of the household goods in question. He, however, found it no

easy achievement to equal the speed of a man, who had just escaped from a long confinement, and who now appeared inclined to indulge his limbs freely in the pleasure of an unlimited exercise. The velocity of Seth continued unabated, until he had conducted Lionel far into the lower parts of the town, where the latter perceived him to encounter a man, with whom he turned suddenly under an arch which led into a dark and narrow court. Lionel instantly increased his speed, and as he entered beneath the passage, he caught a glimpse of the lank figure of the object of his pursuit, gliding through the opposite entrance to the court, and, at the same moment, he encountered the man who had apparently induced the deviation in his route. As Lionel stepped a little on one side, the light of a lamp fell full on the form of the other, and he recognized the person of the active leader of the caucus, (as the political meeting he had attended was called,) though so disguised and muffled, that, but for the accidental opening of the folds of his cloak, the unknown might have passed his nearest friend without discovery.

"We meet again!" exclaimed Lionel, in the quickness of surprise; "though it would seem that the sun is never to shine on our interviews."

The stranger started, and betrayed an evident wish to continue his walk, as though the other had mistaken his person; then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he turned and approached Lionel, with easy dignity, and answered—

"The third time is said to contain the charm! I am happy to find that I meet Major Lincoln unharmed, after the dangers he so lately encountered."

"The dangers have probably been exaggerated by those who wish ill to the cause of our master," returned Lionel, coldly.

There was a calm, but proud smile on the face of the stranger, as he replied—

"I shall not dispute the information of one who bore so conspicuous a part in the deeds of that day—still you will remember, though the march to Lexington was, like our own accidental rencontres, in the dark, that a bright sun shone upon the retreat, and nothing has been hid."

"Nothing need be concealed," replied Lionel, nettled by the proud composure of the other—"unless, indeed, the man I address is afraid to walk the streets of Boston in open day."

"The man you address, Major Lincoln," said the stran-

ger, advancing in his warmth a step nearer to Lionel, "has dared to walk the streets of Boston both by day and by night, when the bullies of him you call your master have strutted their hour in the security of peace ; and, now a nation is up to humble their pretensions, shall he shrink from treading his native soil when he will ?"

"This is bold language from an enemy within a British camp ! Ask yourself what course my duty requires of me ?"

"That is a question which lies between Major Lincoln and his conscience," returned the stranger—"though," he added, after a momentary pause, and in a milder tone, as if he recollected the danger of his situation—"the gentlemen of his name and lineage were not apt to be informers, when they dwelt in the land of their birth."

"Neither is their descendant. But let this be the last of our interviews, until we can meet as friends, or, as enemies should, where we may discuss these topics at the points of our weapons."

"Amen," said the stranger, seizing the hand of the young man, and pressing it with the warmth of a generous emulation—"that hour may not be far distant, and may God smile only on the just cause."

Without uttering more, he drew the folds of his dress more closely around his form, and walked so swiftly away that Lionel, had he possessed the inclination, could not have found an opportunity to arrest his progress. As all expectation of overtaking Seth was now lost, the young soldier returned slowly and thoughtfully towards his quarters.

The two or three succeeding days were distinguished by an appearance of more than usual preparation among the troops, and it became known that officers of rank had closely reconnoitred the grounds of the opposite peninsula. Lionel patiently awaited the progress of events ; but as the probability of active service increased, his wishes to make another effort to probe the secret of the tenant of the warehouse revived, and he took his way towards the Dock-Square, with that object, on the night of the fourth day from the preceding interview with the stranger. It was long after the tattoo had laid the town in that deep quiet, which follows the bustle of a garrison ; and, as he passed along he saw none but the sentinels pacing their short limits, or an occasional officer, returning at that late hour from his revels or his duty. The windows

of the warehouse were dark, and its inhabitants, if any it had, were wrapped in deep sleep. Restless, and excited, Lionel pursued his walk through the narrow and gloomy streets of the North-End, until he unexpectedly found himself issuing upon the open space that is tenanted by the dead, on Copp's-Hill. On this eminence the English general had caused a battery of heavy cannon to be raised and Lionel, unwilling to encounter the challenge of the sentinels, inclining a little to one side, proceeded to the brow of the hill, and, seating himself on a stone, began to muse deeply on his own fortunes, and the situation of the country.

The night was obscure, but the thin vapors which appeared to overhang the place opened at times, when a faint star-light fell from the heavens, and rendered the black hulls of the vessels of war, that lay moored before the town, and the faint outlines of the opposite shores, dimly visible. The stillness of midnight rested on the scene, and when the loud calls of "all's well" ascended from the ships and batteries, the momentary cry was succeeded by a quiet as deep as if the universe slumbered under this assurance of safety. At such an instant, when even the light breathings of the night air were audible, the sound of rippling waters, like that occasioned by raising a paddle with extreme caution, was borne to the ear of the young soldier. He listened intently, and then, bending his eyes in the direction of the faint sounds, he saw a small canoe gliding along the surface of the water, and soon shoot upon the gravelly shore, at the foot of the hill, with a motion so easy and uniform as scarcely to curl a wave on the land. Curious to know who could be moving about the harbor at this hour, in such a secret manner, Lionel was in the act of rising to descend, when he saw the dim figure of a man land from the boat, and climb the hill, directly in a line with his own position. Suppressing even the sounds of his breath, and drawing his body back within the deep shadow cast from a point of the hill, a little above him, Lionel waited until the figure had approached within ten feet of him, when it stopped, and appeared, like himself, to be endeavoring to suppress all other sounds and feelings in the absorbing act of deep attention. The young soldier loosened his sword in its sheath, before he said—

"We have chosen a private spot, and a secret hour, sir, for our meditations!"

Had the figure possessed the impalpable nature of an

immaterial being, it could not have received this remark, so startling from its suddenness, with greater apathy than did the man to whom it was addressed. He turned slowly toward the speaker, and seemed to look at him earnestly, before he answered, in a low, menacing voice—

"There's a granny on the hill, with a gun and baggonet, walking among the cannon, and if he hears people talking down here, he'll make them prisoners, though one of them should be Major Lincoln."

"Ha! Job," said Lionel—"and is it you I meet prowling about like a thief at night!—on what errand of mischief have you been sent this time?"

"If Job's a thief for coming to see the graves on Copp's," returned the lad sullenly, "there's two of them."

"Well answered, boy!" said Lionel, with a smile; "but I repeat, on what errand have you returned to the town at this unseasonable and suspicious hour?"

"Job loves to come up among the graves, before the cocks crow; they say the dead walk when living men sleep."

"And would you hold communion with the dead, then?"

"'Tis sinful to ask them many questions, and such as you do put should be made in the Holy Name," returned the lad, in a tone so solemn, that, connected with the place and the scene, it caused the blood of Lionel to thrill—"but Job loves to be near them, to use him to the damps, ag'in the time he shall be called to walk himself in a sheet at midnight."

"Hush!" said Lionel—"what noise is that?"

Job stood a moment, listening as intently as his companion, before he answered—

"There's no noise but the moaning of the wind in the bay, or the sea tumbling on the beaches of the islands."

"'Tis neither," said Lionel; "I heard the low hum of a hundred voices, or my ears have played me falsely."

"May be the spirits speak to each other," said the lad—"they say their voices are like the rushing winds."

Lionel passed his hand across his brow, and endeavored to recover the tone of his mind, which had been strangely disordered by the solemn manner of his companion, and walked slowly from the spot, closely attended by the silent changeling. He did not stop until he had reached the inner angle of the wall that enclosed the field of the dead, when he paused, and, leaning on the fence, again listened intently.

"Boy, I know not how your silly conversation may have

warped my brain," he said, "but there are surely strange and unearthly sounds lingering about this place, to-night! By heavens! there is another rush of voices, as if the air above the water were filled with living beings; and then, again, I think I hear a noise as if heavy weights were falling to the earth!"

"Ay," said Job, "'tis the clods on the coffins, the dead are going into their graves ag'in, and 'tis time that we should leave them their own grounds."

Lionel hesitated no longer, but he rather ran than walked from the spot, with a secret horror that, at another moment, he would have blushed to acknowledge; nor did he perceive that he was still attended by Job, until he had descended some distance down Lynn Street. Here he was addressed by his companion, in his usually quiet and unmeaning tones—

"There's the house that the governor built, who went down into the sea for money!" he said—"he was a poor boy once, like Job, and now they say his grandson is a great lord, and the king knighted the grand'ther too. It's pretty much the same thing whether a man gets his money out of the sea or out of the earth; the king will make him a lord for it."

"You hold the favors of royalty cheap, fellow," returned Lionel, glancing his eye carelessly at the "Phipps' House," as he passed—"you forget that I am to be some day one of your despised knights!"

"I know it," said Job; "and you come from America too—it seems to me that all the poor boys go from America to the king to be great lords, and all the sons of the great lords come to America to be made poor boys—Nab says Job is the son of a great lord too!"

"Then Nab is as great a fool as her child," said Lionel; "but, boy, I would see your mother in the morning, and I expect you to let me know at what hour I may visit her."

Job did not answer, and Lionel, on turning his head, perceived that he was suddenly deserted by the changeling, who was already gliding back towards his favorite haunt among the graves. Vexed at the wild humors of the lad, Lionel hastened to his quarters, and threw himself in his bed, though he heard the loud cries of "all's well," again and again, before the strange fantasies, which continued to cross his mind, would permit him to obtain the rest he sought.

CHAPTER XV.

"We are finer gentlemen, no doubt, than the plain farmers we are about to encounter. Our hats carry a smarter cock, our swords hang more gracefully by our sides, and we make an easier figure in a ballroom ; but let it be remembered, that the most finished macaroni amongst us, would pass for an arrant clown at Pekin."—*Letter from a Veteran Officer, &c.*

WHEN the heavy sleep of morning fell upon his senses, visions of the past and future mingled with wild confusion in the dreams of the youthful soldier. The form of his father stood before him, as he had known it in his childhood, fair in the proportions and vigor of manhood, regarding him with those eyes of benignant, but melancholy affection, which characterized their expression after he had become the sole joy of his widowed parent. While his heart was warming at the sight, the figure melted away, and was succeeded by fantastic phantoms, which appeared to dance among the graves on Copp's, led along in those gambols, which partook of the ghastly horrors of the dead, by Job Pray, who glided among the tombs like a being of another world. Sudden and loud thunder then burst upon them, and the shadows fled into their secret places, from whence he could see, ever and anon, some glassy eyes and spectral faces, peering out upon him, as if conscious of the power they possessed to chill the blood of the living. His visions now became painfully distinct, and his sleep was oppressed with their vividness, when his senses burst their unnatural bonds, and he awoke. The air of morning was breathing through his open curtains, and the light of day had already shed itself upon the dusky roofs of the town. Lionel arose from his bed, and had paced his chamber several times, in a vain effort to shake off the images that had haunted his slumbers, when the sounds which broke upon the stillness of the air, became too plain to be longer mistaken by a practised ear.

"Ha!" he muttered to himself, "I have been dreaming but by halves—these are the sounds of no fancied tempest, but cannon, speaking most plainly to the soldier!"

He opened his window, and looked out upon the surrounding scene. The roar of artillery was now quick and heavy, and Lionel bent his eyes about him to discover the cause of this unusual occurrence. It had been the policy of Gage to await the arrival of his reinforcements, before

he struck a blow, which was intended to be decisive ; and the Americans were well known to be too scantily supplied with the munitions of war, to waste a single charge of powder in any of the vain attacks of modern sieges. A knowledge of these facts gave an additional interest to the curiosity with which Major Lincoln endeavored to penetrate the mystery of so singular a disturbance. Window after window in the adjacent buildings soon exhibited, like his own, its wondering and alarmed spectator. Here and there a half-dressed soldier, or a busy townsman, was seen hurrying along the silent streets, with steps that denoted the eagerness of his curiosity. Women began to rush wildly from their dwellings; and then, as the sounds broke on their ears with ten-fold heaviness in the open air, they shrunk back into their habitations in pallid dismay. Lionel called to three or four of the men, as they hurried by ; but, turning their eyes wildly towards his window, they passed on without answering, as if the emergency were too pressing to admit of speech. Finding his repeated inquiries fruitless, he hastily dressed himself, and descended to the street. As he left his own door, a half-clad artillerist hurried past him, adjusting his garments with one hand, and bearing in the other some of the lesser implements of the particular corps in which he served.

"What means the firing, sergeant," demanded Lionel, "and whither do you hasten with those fuses?"

"The rebels, your honor, the rebels !" returned the soldier, looking back to speak, without ceasing his speed ; "and I go to my guns !"

"The rebels !" repeated Lionel—"what can we have to fear from a mob of countrymen, in such a position—that fellow has slept from his post, and apprehensions for himself mingle with this zeal for his king !"

The towns-people now began to pour from their dwellings in scores ; and Lionel imitated their example, and took his course towards the adjacent height of Beacon-Hill. He toiled his way up the steep ascent, in company with twenty more, without exchanging a syllable with men who appeared as much astonished as himself at this early interruption of their slumbers, and in a few minutes he stood on the little grassy platform, surrounded by a hundred interested gazers. The sun had just lifted the thin veil of mist from the bosom of the waters, and the eye was permitted to range over a wide field beneath the light vapor. Several vessels were moored in the channels of the Charles

and Mystic, to cover the northern approaches to the place ; and as he beheld the column of white smoke that was wreathing about the masts of a frigate among them, Lionel was no longer at a loss to comprehend whence the firing proceeded. While he was yet gazing, uncertain of the reasons which demanded this show of war, immense fields of smoke burst from the side of a ship of the line, who also opened her deep-mouthed cannon, and presently her example was followed by several floating batteries, and lighter vessels, until the wide amphitheatre of hills that encircled Boston, was filled with the echoes of a hundred pieces of artillery.

"What can it mean, sir ?" exclaimed a young officer of his own regiment, addressing Major Lincoln—"the sailors are in downright earnest, and they scale their guns with shot, I know, by the rattling of the reports!"

"I can boast of a vision no better than your own," returned Lionel ; "for no enemy can I see. As the guns seem pointed at the opposite peninsula, it is probable a party of the Americans are attempting to destroy the grass which lies newly mown in the meadows."

The young officer was in the act of assenting to this conjecture, when a voice was heard above their heads, shouting—

"There goes a gun from Copp's ! They needn't think to frighten the people with their rake-helly noises ; let them blaze away till the dead get out of their graves—the Bay-men will keep the hill !"

Every eye was immediately turned upward, and the wondering and amused spectators discovered Job Pray, seated in the grate of the beacon, his countenance, usually so vacant, gleaming with exultation, while he continued waving his hat high in air, as gun after gun was added to the uproar of the cannonade.

"How now, fellow !" exclaimed Lionel : "what see you ? and where are the Bay-men of whom you speak ?"

"Where ?" returned the simpleton, clapping his hands with childish delight—"why, where they came at dark midnight, and where they'll stand at open noonday ! The Bay-men can look into the windows of old Funnel at last, and now let the reg'lars come on, and they'll teach the godless murderers the law !"

Lionel, a little irritated with the bold language of Job, called to him in an angry voice—

"Come down from that perch, fellow, and explain your—"

self, or this grenadier shall lift you from your seat, and transfer you to the post for a little of that wholesome correction which you need."

"You promised that the grannies should never flog Job ag'in," said the changeling, crouching down in the grate, whence he looked out at his threatened chastiser with a lowering and sullen eye—"and Job agreed to run your a'r'nds, and not take any of the king's crowns in pay."

"Come down, then, this instant, and I will remember the compact."

Comforted by this assurance, which was made in a more friendly tone, Job threw himself carelessly from his iron seat, and clinging to the post, he slid swiftly to the earth, where Major Lincoln immediately arrested him by the arm, and demanded—

"Where are those Bay-men, I once more ask?"

"There!" repeated Job, pointing over the low roofs of the town, in the direction of the opposite peninsula. "They dug their cellar on Breed's, and now they are fixing the underpinnin', and next you'll see what a raising they'll invite the people to!"

The instant the spot was named, all those eyes which had hitherto gazed at the vessels themselves, instead of searching for the object of their hostility, were turned on the green eminence which rose a little to the right of the village of Charlestown, and every doubt was at once removed by the discovery. The high, conical summit of Bunker Hill lay naked, and unoccupied, as on the preceding day; but on the extremity of a more humble ridge, which extended within a short distance of the water, a low bank of earth had been thrown up, for purposes which no military eye could mistake. This redoubt, small and in-artificial as it was, commanded by its position the whole of the inner harbor of Boston, and even endangered, in some measure, the occupants of the town itself. It was the sudden appearance of this magical mound, as the mists of the morning had dispersed, which roused the slumbering seamen; and it had already become the target of all the guns of the shipping in the bay. Amazement at the temerity of their countrymen held the townsfolk silent, while Major Lincoln, and the few officers who stood nigh him, saw, at a glance, that this step on the part of their adversaries would bring the affairs of the leaguer to an instant crisis. In vain they turned their wondering looks on the neighboring eminence, and around the different points of the

peninsula, in quest of those places of support, with which soldiers generally entrench their defences. The husbandmen opposed to them had seized upon the point best calculated to annoy their foes, without regard to the consequences; and in a few short hours, favored by the mantle of night, had thrown up their work with a dexterity that was only exceeded by their boldness. The truth flashed across the brain of Major Lincoln with his first glance, and he felt his cheeks glow as he remembered the low and indistinct murmurs, which the night air had wafted to his ears, and those inexplicable fancies, which had even continued to haunt him till dispersed by truth and the light of day. Motioning to Job to follow, he left the hill with a hurried step, and when they gained the Common, he turned, and said, sternly, to his companion—

“Fellow, you have been privy to this midnight work!”

“Job has enough to do in the day, without laboring in the night, when none but the dead are out of their places of rest,” returned the lad, with a look of mental imbecility, which immediately disarmed the resentment of the other.

Lionel smiled as he again remembered his own weakness, and repeated to himself—

“The dead! ay, these are the works of the living; and bold men are they who have dared to do the deed. But tell me, Job,—for ’tis in vain to attempt deceiving me any longer—what number of Americans did you leave on the hill, when you crossed the Charles to visit the graves on Copp’s, the past night?”

“Both hills were crowded,” returned the other—
“Breed’s with the people, and Copp’s with the ghosts—Job believes the dead rose to see their children digging so nigh them!”

“’Tis probable,” said Lionel, who believed it wisest to humor the wild conceits of the lad, in order to disarm his cunning; “but, though the dead are invisible, the living may be counted.”

“Job did count five hundred men, marching over the nose of Bunker, by starlight, with their picks and spades; and then he stopped, for he forgot whether seven or eight hundred came next.”

“And after you had ceased to count, did many others pass?”

“The Bay colony isn’t so poorly off for men, that it can’t muster a thousand at a raising.”

"But you had a master workman on the occasion ; was it the wolf-hunter of Connecticut ?"

"There is no occasion to go from the province to find a workman to lay out a cellar ! Dickey Gridley is a Boston boy !"

"Ah ! he is the chief ! we can have nothing to fear then, since the Connecticut woodsman is not at their head !"

"Do you think old Prescott, of Pepperel, will quit the hill while he has a kernel of powder to burn ?—no, no, Major Lincoln, Ralph himself an't a stouter warrior ; and you can't frighten Ralph !"

"But if they fire their cannon often, their small stock of ammunition will be soon consumed, and then they must unavoidably run."

Job laughed tauntingly, and with an appearance of high scorn, before he answered—

"Yes, if the Bay-men were as dumb as the king's troops, and used such big guns ! but the cannon of the colony want but little brimstone, and there's but few of them. Let the rake-hellies go up to Breed's ; the people will teach them the law !"

Lionel had now obtained all he expected to learn from the simpleton, concerning the force and condition of the Americans ; and as the moments were too precious to be wasted in vain discourse, he bid the lad repair to his quarters that night, and left him. On entering his own lodgings, Major Lincoln shut himself up in his private apartment, and passed several hours in writing, and examining important papers. One letter, in particular, was written, read, torn, and re-written, five or six times, until at length he placed his seal, and directed the important paper with a sort of carelessness that denoted his patience was exhausted by repeated trials. These documents were entrusted to Meriton, with orders to deliver them to their several addresses, unless countermanded before the following day ; and the young man hastily swallowed a late and light breakfast. While shut up in his closet, Lionel had several times thrown aside his pen to listen, as the hum of the place penetrated to his retirement, and announced the excitement and bustle which pervaded the streets of the town. Having at length completed the task he had assigned himself, he caught up his hat, and took his way, with hasty steps, into the centre of the place.

Cannon were rattling over the rough pavements, followed by ammunition wagons, and officers and men of the

artillery were seen in swift pursuit of their pieces. Aides-de-camp were riding furiously through the streets, charged with important messages ; and here and there an officer might be seen issuing from his quarters, with a countenance in which manly pride struggled powerfully with inward dejection, as he caught the last glance of anguish, which followed his retiring form, from eyes that had been used to meet his own with looks of confidence and love. There was, however, but little time to dwell on these flitting glimpses of domestic woe, amid the general bustle and glitter of the scene. Now and then the strains of martial music broke up through the windings of the crooked avenues, and detachments of the troops wheeled by, on their way to the appointed place of embarkation. While Lionel stood a moment at the corner of a street, admiring the firm movement of a body of grenadiers, his eye fell on the powerful frame and rigid features of M'Fuse, marching at the head of his company with that gravity which regarded the accuracy of the step amongst the important incidents of life. At a short distance from him was Job Pray, timing his paces to the tread of the soldiers, and regarding the gallant show with stupid admiration, while his ear unconsciously drank the inspiring music of their band. As this fine body of men passed on, it was immediately succeeded by a battalion, in which Lionel instantly recognized the facings of his own regiment. The warm-hearted Polwarth led its forward files, and, waving his hand, he cried—

“God bless you, Leo, God bless you—we shall make a fair stand up fight of this ; there is an end of all stag-hunting.”

The notes of the horns rose above his voice, and Lionel could do no more than return his cordial salute ; when, recalled to his purpose by the sight of his comrades, he turned and pursued his way to the quarters of the commander-in-chief.

The gate of Province-House was thronged with military men ; some waiting for admittance, and others entering and departing with the air of those who were charged with the execution of matters of the deepest moment. The name of Major Lincoln was hardly announced before an aid appeared to conduct him into the presence of the governor, with a politeness and haste that several gentlemen, who had been in waiting for hours, deemed in a trifling degree unjust.

Lionel, however, having little to do with murmurs which he did not hear, followed his conductor, and was immediately ushered into the apartment, where a council of war had just closed its deliberations. On the threshold of its door he was compelled to give way to an officer, who was departing in haste, and whose powerful frame seemed bent a little in the intensity of thought, as his dark, military countenance lighted for an instant with the salutation he returned to the low bow of the young soldier. Around this chief a group of younger men immediately clustered, and as they departed in company, Lionel was enabled to gather from their conversation, that they took their way for the field of battle. The room was filled with officers of high rank; though here and there was to be seen a man in civil attire, whose disappointed and bitter looks announced him to be one of those mandamus counsellors, whose evil advice had hastened the mischief their wisdom could never repair. From out a small circle of these mortified civilians, the unpretending person of Gage advanced to meet Lionel, forming a marked contrast, by the simplicity of his dress, to the military splendor that was glittering around him.

"In what can I oblige Major Lincoln?" he said, taking the young man by the hand cordially, as if glad to be rid of the troublesome counsellors he had so unceremoniously quitted.

"'Wolfe's own' has just passed me on its way to the boats, and I have ventured to intrude on your excellency to inquire if it were not time its major had resumed his duty."

A shade of thought was seated for a moment on the placid features of the general, and he then answered with a friendly smile—

"'Twill be no more than an affair of out-posts, and must be quickly ended. But should I grant the request of every brave young man whose spirit is up to-day, it might cost his majesty's service the life of some officer that would make the purchase of the pile of earth too dear."

"But may I not be permitted to say, that the family of Lincoln is of the province, and its example should not be lost on such an occasion?"

"The loyalty of the colonies is too well represented here to need the sacrifice," said Gage glancing his eyes carelessly at the expecting group behind him.—"My council have decided on the officers to be employed, and I regret

that Major Lincoln's name was omitted, since I know it will give him pain; but valuable lives are not to be lightly and unnecessarily exposed."

Lionel bowed in submission; and, after communicating the little he had gathered from Job Pray, he turned away, and found himself near another officer of high rank, who smiled as he observed his disappointed countenance, and, taking him by the arm, led him from the room, with a freedom suited to his fine figure and easy air.

"Then, like myself, Lincoln, you are not to battle for the king to-day," he said, on gaining the ante-chamber. "Howe has the luck of the occasion, if there can be luck in so vulgar an affair. But *allons*; accompany me to Copp's, as a spectator, since they deny us parts in the drama; and perhaps we may pick up materials for a pasquinade, though not for an epic."

"Pardon me, General Burgoyne," said Lionel, "if I view the matter with more serious eyes than yourself."

"Ah! I had forgot that you were a follower of Percy in the hunt of Lexington!" interrupted the other; "we will call it a tragedy, then, if it better suits your humor. For myself, Lincoln, I weary of these crooked streets and gloomy houses, and, having some taste for the poetry of nature, would have long since looked out upon the deserted fields of these husbandmen, had the authority, as well as the inclination, rested with me. But Clinton is joining us; he, too, is for Copp's, where we can all take a lesson in arms, by studying the manner in which Howe wields his battalions."

A soldier of middle age now joined them, whose stout frame, while it wanted the grace and ease of the gentleman who still held Lionel by the arm, bore a martial character to which the look of the quiet and domestic Gage was a stranger; and, followed by their several attendants, the whole party immediately left the Government-house to take their destined position on the eminence so often mentioned.

As they entered the street, Burgoyne relinquished the arm of his companion, and moved with becoming dignity by the side of his brother general. Lionel gladly availed himself of this alteration, to withdraw a little from the group, whose steps he followed at such a distance as permitted him to observe those exhibitions of feeling, on the part of the inhabitants, which the pride of the others induced them to overlook. Pallid and anxious female faces

were gleaming out upon them from every window, while the roofs of the houses, and the steeples of the churches, were beginning to throng with more daring, and equally interested spectators. The drums no longer rolled along the narrow streets, though occasionally, the shrill strain of a sife was heard from the water, announcing the movements of the troops to the opposite peninsula. Over all was heard the incessant roaring of the artillery, which, untired, had not ceased to rumble in the air since the appearance of light, until the ear, accustomed to its presence, had learnt to distinguish the lesser sounds we have recorded.

As the party descended into the lower passages of the town, it appeared deserted by everything having life ; the open windows and neglected doors betraying the urgency of the feelings, which had called the population to situations more favorable for observing the approaching contest. This appearance of intense curiosity excited the sympathies of even the old and practised soldiers ; and, quickening their paces, the whole soon rose from among the gloomy edifices to the open and unobstructed view from the hill.

The whole scene now lay before them. Nearly in their front was the village of Charlestown, with its deserted streets, and silent roofs, looking like a place of the dead ; or, if the signs of life were visible within its open avenues, 'twas merely some figure moving swiftly in the solitude, like one who hastened to quit the devoted spot. On the opposite point of the southeastern face of the peninsula, and at the distance of a thousand yards, the ground was already covered by masses of human beings, in scarlet, with their arms glittering in a noonday sun. Between the two, though in the more immediate vicinity of the silent town, the rounded ridge, already described, rose abruptly from a flat that was bounded by the water, until, having attained an elevation of some fifty or sixty feet, it swelled gradually to the little crest, where was planted the humble object that had occasioned all this commotion. The meadows, on the right, were still peaceful and smiling, as in the most quiet days of the province, though the excited fancy of Lionel imagined that a sullen stillness lingered about, the neglected kilns in their front, and over the whole landscape, that was in gloomy consonance with the approaching scene. Far on the left, across the waters of the Charles, the American camp had poured forth its thousands to the hills ; and the whole population of the country, for many

miles inland, had gathered to a point, to witness a struggle charged with the fate of their nation. Beacon Hill rose from out the appalling silence of the town of Boston, like a pyramid of living faces, with every eye fixed on the fatal point ; and men hung along the yards of the shipping, or were suspended on cornices, cupolas, and steeples, in thoughtless security, while every other sense was lost in the absorbing interest of the sight. The vessels of war had hauled deep into the rivers, or, more properly, those narrow arms of the sea which formed the peninsula, and sent their iron missiles, with unwearied industry, across the low passage, which alone opened the means of communication between the self-devoted yeomen on the hill, and their distant countrymen. While battalion landed after battalion on the point, cannon-balls from the battery of Copp's, and the vessels of war, were glancing up the natural glacis that surrounded the redoubt, burying themselves in its earthen parapet, or plunging with violence into the deserted sides of the loftier height which lay a few hundred yards in its rear ; and the black and smoking bombs, appeared to hover above the spot, as if pausing to select the places in which to plant their deadly combustibles.

Notwithstanding these appalling preparations, and ceaseless annoyances, throughout that long and anxious morning, the stout husbandmen on the hill had never ceased their steady efforts to maintain, to the uttermost extremity, the post they had so daringly assumed. In vain the English exhausted every means to disturb their stubborn foes ; the pick, the shovel, and the spade continued to perform their offices ; and mound rose after mound, amidst the din and danger of the cannonade, steadily, and as well as if the fanciful conceits of Job Pray embraced their real objects, and the laborers were employed in the peaceful pursuits of their ordinary lives. This firmness, however, was not like the proud front, which high training can impart to the most common mind ; for, ignorant of the glare of military show ; in the simple and rude vestments of their calling ; armed with such weapons as they had seized from the hooks above their own mantels ; and without even a banner to wave its cheering folds above their heads, they stood, sustained only by the righteousness of their cause, and those deep moral principles which they had received from their fathers, and which they intended this day should show were to be transmitted untarnished to their children. It was afterward known, that they endured their labors

and their dangers even in want of that sustenance, which is so essential to support animal spirits in moments of calmness and ease ; while their enemies, on the point, awaiting the arrival of their latest bands, were securely devouring a meal, which to hundreds amongst them proved to be their last. The fatal instant now seemed approaching. A general movement was seen among the battalions of the British, who began to spread along the shore, under cover of the brow of the hill—the lingering boats having arrived with the rear of their detachments—and officers hurried from regiment to regiment with the final mandates of their chief. At this moment a body of Americans appeared on the crown of Bunker Hill, and descending swiftly by the road, disappeared in the meadows to the left of their own redoubt. This band was followed by others, who, like themselves, had broken through the dangers of the narrow pass, by braving the fire of the shipping, and who also hurried to join their comrades on the low land. The British general determined at once to anticipate the arrival of further reinforcements, and gave forth the long-expected order to prepare for the attack.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Th’ imperious Briton, on the well-fought ground,
No cause for joy, or wanton triumph found ;
But saw, with grief, their dreams of conquest vain,
Felt the deep wounds, and mourn’d their vet’rans slain.”

—HUMPHREYS.

THE Americans had made a show, in the course of that fearful morning, of returning the fire of their enemies, by throwing a few shot from their light field-pieces, as if in mockery of the tremendous cannonade which they sustained. But as the moment of severest trial approached, the same awful stillness, which had settled upon the deserted streets of Charlestown, hovered around the redoubt. On the meadows, to its left, the recently arrived bands hastily threw the rails of two fences into one, and, covering the whole with the mown grass that surrounded them, they posted themselves along the frail defence, which answered no better purpose than to conceal their weakness from their adversaries. Behind this characteristic rampart, several bodies of husbandmen, from the neighboring prov-

inces of New Hampshire and Connecticut, lay on their arms, in sullen expectation. Their line extended from the shore to the base of the ridge, where it terminated several hundred feet behind the works ; leaving a wide opening in a diagonal direction, between the fence and an earthen breastwork, which ran a short distance down the declivity of the hill, from the northeastern angle of the redoubt. A few hundred yards in the rear of this rude disposition, the naked crest of Bunker Hill rose unoccupied and undefended ; and the streams of the Charles and Mystic, sweeping around its base, approached so near each other as to blend the sounds of their rippling. It was across this low and narrow isthmus, that the royal frigates poured a stream of fire, that never ceased, while around it hovered the numerous parties of the undisciplined Americans, hesitating to attempt the dangerous passage.

In this manner Gage had, in a great degree, surrounded the devoted peninsula with his power ; and the bold men, who had so daringly planted themselves under the muzzles of his cannon, were left, as already stated, unsupported, without nourishment, and with weapons from their own gun-hooks, singly to maintain the honor of their nation. Including men of all ages and conditions, there might have been two thousand of them ; but, as the day advanced, small bodies of their countrymen, taking counsel of their feelings, and animated by the example of the old partisan of the woods, who crossed and recrossed the neck, loudly scoffing at the danger, broke through the fire of the shipping in time to join in the closing and bloody business of the hour.

On the other hand, Howe led more than an equal number of the chosen troops of his prince ; and as boats continued to ply between the two peninsulas throughout the afternoon, the relative disparity continued undiminished to the end of the struggle. It was at this point in our narrative that, deeming himself sufficiently strong to force the defences of his despised foes, the arrangements immediately preparatory to such an undertaking were made in full view of the excited spectators. Notwithstanding the security with which the English general marshalled his warriors, he felt that the approaching contest would be a battle of no common incidents. The eyes of tens of thousands were fastened on his movements, and the occasion demanded the richest display of the pageantry of war.

The troops formed with beautiful accuracy, and the columns moved steadily along the shore, and took their assigned stations under cover of the brow of the eminence. Their force was in some measure divided ; one moiety attempting the toilsome ascent of the hill, and the other moving along the beach, or in the orchards of the more level ground, toward the husbandmen on the meadows. The latter soon disappeared behind some fruit-trees and the brickkilns just mentioned. The advance of the royal columns up the ascent was slow and measured, giving time to their field-guns to add their efforts to the uproar of the cannonade, which broke out with new fury as the battalions prepared to march. When each column arrived at the allotted point, it spread the gallant array of its glittering warriors under a bright sun.

"It is a glorious spectacle," murmured the graceful chieftain by the side of Lionel, keenly alive to all the poetry of his alluring profession ; "how exceeding soldier-like ! and with what accuracy his 'first-arm ascends the hill,' toward his enemy !"

The intensity of his feelings prevented Major Lincoln from replying, and the other soon forgot that he had spoken, in the overwhelming anxiety of the moment. The advance of the British line, so beautiful and slow, resembled rather the ordered steadiness of a drill, than an approach to a deadly struggle. Their standards fluttered proudly above them ; and there were moments when the wild music of their bands was heard rising on the air, and tempering the ruder sounds of the artillery. The young and thoughtless in their ranks turned their faces backward, and smiled exultingly, as they beheld steeples, roofs, masts, and heights, teeming with their thousands of eyes, bent on the show of their bright array. As the British lines moved in open view of the little redoubt, and began slowly to gather around its different faces, gun after gun became silent, and the curious artillerist, or tired seaman, lay extended on his heated piece, gazing in mute wonder at the spectacle. There was just then a minute when the roar of the cannonade seemed passing away like the rumbling of distant thunder.

"They will not fight, Lincoln," said the animated leader at the side of Lionel—"the military front of Howe has chilled the hearts of the knaves, and our victory will be bloodless !"

"We shall see, sir—we shall see !"

These words were barely uttered, when platoon after platoon, among the British, delivered its fire, the blaze of musketry flashing swiftly around the brow of the hill, and was immediately followed by heavy volleys that ascended from the orchard. Still no answering sound was heard from the Americans, and the royal troops were soon lost to the eye, as they slowly marched into the white cloud which their own fire had alone created.

"They are cowed, by heavens—the dogs are cowed!" once more cried the gay companion of Lionel, "and Howe is within two hundred feet of them, unharmed!"

At that instant a sheet of flame glanced through the smoke, like lightning playing in a cloud, while at one report a thousand muskets were added to the uproar. It was not altogether fancy which led Lionel to imagine that he saw the smoky canopy of the hill to wave, as if the trained warriors it enveloped faltered before this close and appalling discharge; but, in another instant, the stimulating war-cry, and the loud shouts of the combatants were borne across the strait to his ears, even amid the horrid din of the combat. Ten breathless minutes flew by like a moment of time, and the bewildered spectators on Copp's were still gazing intently on the scene, when a voice was raised among them, shouting—

"Hurrah! let the rake-hellies go up to Breed's; the people will teach 'em the law!"

"Throw the rebel scoundrel from the hill! Blow him from the muzzle of a gun!" cried twenty soldiers in a breath.

"Hold!" exclaimed Lionel—" 'tis a simpleton, an idiot, a fool!"

But the angry and savage murmurs as quickly subsided, and were lost in other feelings, as the bright red lines of the royal troops were seen issuing from the smoke, waving and recoiling before the still vivid fire of their enemies.

"Ha!" said Burgoyne—" 'tis some feint to draw the rebels from their hold!"

" 'Tis a palpable and disgraceful retreat!" muttered the stern warrior nigh him, whose truer eye detected at a glance the discomfiture of the assailants.—" 'Tis another base retreat before the rebels!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the reckless changeling again; "there come the reg'lers out of the orchard too!—see the grannies skulking behind the kilns! Let them go on to Breed's; the people will teach 'em the law!"

No cry of vengeance preceded the act this time, but fifty of the soldiery rushed, as by a common impulse, on their prey. Lionel had not time to utter a word of remonstrance, before Job appeared in the air, borne on the uplifted arms of a dozen men, and at the next instant he was seen rolling down the steep declivity, with a velocity that carried him to the water's edge. Springing to his feet, the undaunted changeling once more waved his hat in triumph, and shouted forth again his offensive challenge. Then turning, he launched his canoe from its hiding place among the adjacent lumber, amid a shower of stones, and glided across the strait; his little bark escaping unnoticed in the crowd of boats that were rowing in all directions. But his progress was watched by the uneasy eye of Lionel, who saw him land and disappear, with hasty steps, in the silent streets of the town.

While this trifling by-play was enacting, the great drama of the day was not at a stand. The smoky veil, which clung around the brow of the eminence, was lifted by the air, and sailed heavily away to the southwest, leaving the scene of the bloody struggle again open to the view. Lionel witnessed the grave and meaning glances which the two lieutenants of the king exchanged as they simultaneously turned their glasses from the fatal spot, and, taking the one proffered by Burgoyne, he read their explanation in the numbers of the dead that lay profusely scattered in front of the redoubt. At this instant, an officer from the field held an earnest communication with the two leaders; when, having delivered his orders, he hastened back to his boat, like one who felt himself employed in matters of life and death.

"It shall be done, sir," repeated Clinton, as the other departed, his honest brow sternly knit under high martial excitement.—"The artillery have their orders, and the work will be accomplished without delay."

"This, Major Lincoln!" cried his more sophisticated companion, "this is one of the trying duties of the soldier! To fight, to bleed, or even to die, for his prince, is his happy privilege; but it is sometimes his unfortunate lot to become the instrument of vengeance."

Lionel waited but a moment for an explanation—the flaming balls were soon seen taking their wide circuit in the air, and carrying their desolation among the close and inflammable roofs of the opposite town. In a very few minutes, a dense, black smoke arose from the deserted

buildings, and forked flames played actively along the heated shingles, as though rioting in their unmolested possession of the place. He regarded the gathering destruction in painful silence; and, on bending his looks toward his companions, he fancied, notwithstanding the language of the other, that he read the deepest regret in the averted eye of him who had so unhesitatingly uttered the fatal mandate to destroy.

In scenes like these we are attempting to describe, hours appear to be minutes, and time flies as imperceptibly as life slides from beneath the feet of age. The disordered ranks of the British had been arrested at the base of the hill, and were again forming under the eyes of their leaders, with admirable discipline, and extraordinary care. Fresh battalions, from Boston, marched with high military pride into the line, and everything betokened that a second assault was at hand. When the moment of stupid amazement, which succeeded the retreat of the royal troops, had passed, the troops and batteries poured out their wrath with tenfold fury on their enemies. Shot were incessantly glancing up the gentle acclivity, madly ploughing across its grassy surface, while black and threatening shells appeared to hover above the work, like the monsters of the air, about to stoop upon their prey.

Still all lay quiet and immovable within the low mounds of earth, as if none there had a stake in the issue of the bloody day. For a few moments only the tall figure of an aged man was seen slowly moving along the summit of the rampart, calmly regarding the dispositions of the English general in the more distant part of his line, and after exchanging a few words with a gentleman, who joined him in his dangerous lookout, they disappeared together behind the grassy banks. Lionel soon detected the name of Prescott, of Pepperell, passing through the crowd in low murmurs, and his glass did not deceive him when he thought, in the smaller of the two, he had himself descried the graceful person of the unknown leader of the "caucus."

All eyes were now watching the advance of the battalions, which once more drew nigh the point of contest. The heads of the columns were already in view of their enemies when a man was seen swiftly ascending the hill from the burning town: he paused amid the peril, on the natural glacis, and swung his hat triumphantly, and Lionel even fancied he heard the exulting cry, as he recognized

the ungainly form of the simpleton, before it plunged into the work.

The right of the British once more disappeared in the orchard, and the columns in front of the redoubt again opened with all the imposing exactness of their high discipline. Their arms were already glittering in a line with the green faces of the mound, and Lionel heard the experienced warrior at his side murmuring to himself—

“Let him hold his fire, and he will go in at the point of the bayonet!”

But the trial was too great for even the practised courage of the royal troops. Volley succeeded volley, and in a few moments they had again curtained their ranks behind the misty screen produced by their own fire. Then came the terrible flash from the redoubt, and the eddying volumes from the adverse hosts rolled into one cloud enveloping the combatants in its folds, as if to conceal their bloody work from the spectators. Twenty times, in the short space of as many minutes, Major Lincoln fancied he heard the incessant roll of American musketry die away before the heavy and regular volleys of the troops; and then he thought the sounds of the latter grew more faint, and were given at longer intervals.

The result, however, was soon known. The heavy bank of smoke, which now even clung along the ground, was broken in fifty places; and the disordered masses of the British were seen driven before their deliberate foes, in wild confusion. The flashing swords of the officers in vain attempted to arrest the torrent, nor did the flight cease, with many of the regiments, until they had even reached their boats. At this moment a hum was heard in Boston, like the sudden rush of wind, and men gazed in each other's faces with undisguised amazement. Here and there a low sound of exultation escaped some unguarded lip, and many an eye gleamed with a triumph that could no longer be suppressed. Until this moment the feelings of Lionel had vacillated between the pride of country and his military spirit; but, losing all other feelings in the latter sensation, he now looked fiercely about him as if he would seek the man who dare exult in the repulse of his comrades. The poetic chieftain was still at his side, biting his nether lip in vexation; but his more tried companion had suddenly disappeared. Another quick glance fell upon his missing form in the act of entering a boat at the foot of

the hill. Quicker than thought, Lionel was on the shore, crying, as he flew to the water's edge—

"Hold! for God's sake, hold! remember the 47th is in the field, and that I am its major!"

"Receive him," said Clinton, with that grim satisfaction with which men acknowledge a valued friend in moments of great trial; "and then row for your lives, or, what is of more value, for the honor of the British name."

The brain of Lionel whirled as the boat shot along its watery bed, but before it had gained the middle of the stream he had time to consider the whole of the appalling scene. The fire had spread from house to house, and the whole village of Charlestown, with its four hundred buildings, was just bursting into flames. The air seemed filled with whistling balls, as they hurtled above his head, and the black sides of the vessels of war were vomiting their sheets of flame with unwearied industry. Amid this tumult, the English general and his companions sprung to land. The former rushed into the disordered ranks, and by his presence and voice recalled the men of one regiment to their duty. But long and loud appeals to their spirit and their ancient fame were necessary to restore a moiety of their former confidence to men who had been thus rudely repulsed, and who now looked along their thinned and exhausted ranks, missing, in many instances, more than half the well-known countenances of their fellows. In the midst of the faltering troops stood their stern and unbending chief; but of all those gay and gallant youths, who followed in his train as he had departed from Province-House that morning, not one remained, but in his blood. He alone seemed undisturbed in that disordered crowd; and his mandates went forth as usual, calm and determined. At length the panic, in some degree, subsided, and order was once more restored as the high-spirited and mortified gentlemen of the detachment regained their lost authority.

The leaders consulted together, apart, and the dispositions were immediately renewed for the assault. Military show was no longer affected, but the soldiers laid down all the useless implements of their trade, and many even cast aside their outer garments, under the warmth of a broiling sun, added to the heat of the conflagration, which began to diffuse itself along the extremity of the peninsula. Fresh companies were placed in the columns, and most of the troops were withdrawn from the meadows, leaving

merely a few skirmishers to amuse the Americans who lay behind the fence. When each disposition was completed, the final signal was given to advance.

Lionel had taken post in his regiment, but marching on the skirt of the column, he commanded a view of most of the scene of battle. In his front moved a battalion, reduced to a handful of men in the previous assaults. Behind these came a party of the marine guards, from the shipping, led by their own veteran major; and next followed the dejected Nesbitt and his corps, amongst whom Lionel looked in vain for the features of the good-natured Polwarth. Similar columns marched on their right and left, encircling three sides of the redoubt by their battalions.

A few minutes brought him in full view of that humble and unfinished mound of earth, for the possession of which so much blood had that day been spilt in vain. It lay, as before, still as if none breathed within its bosom, though a terrific row of dark tubes were arrayed along its top, following the movements of the approaching columns, as the eyes of the imaginary charmers of our own wilderness are said to watch their victims. As the uproar of the artillery again grew fainter, the crash of falling streets, and the appalling sounds of the conflagration, on their left, became more audible. Immense volumes of black smoke issued from the smouldering ruins, and, bellying outward, fold beyond fold, it overhung the work in a hideous cloud, casting its gloomy shadow across the place of blood.

A strong column was now seen ascending, as if from out the burning town, and the advance of the whole became quick and spirited. A low call ran through the platoons to note the naked weapons of their adversaries, and it was followed by the cry of "To the bayonet! to the bayonet!"

"Hurrah! for the Royal Irish!" shouted M'Fuse, at the head of the dark column from the conflagration.

"Hurrah!" echoed a well-known voice from the silent mound. "Let them come on to Breed's; the people will teach 'em the law!"

Men think at such moments with the rapidity of lightning, and Lionel had even fancied his comrades in possession of the work, when the terrible stream of fire flashed in the faces of the men in front.

"Push on with the ——th," cried the veteran major of marines—"push on, or the 18th will get the honor of the day!"

"We cannot," murmured the soldiers of the —th; "their fire is too heavy!"

"Then break, and let the marines pass through you!"

The feeble battalion melted away, and the warriors of the deep, trained to conflicts of hand to hand, sprang forward, with a loud shout, in their places. The Americans, exhausted of their ammunition, now sunk sullenly back, a few hurling stones at their foes, in desperate indignation. The cannon of the British had been brought to enfilade their short breastwork, which was no longer tenable; and as the columns approached closer to the low rampart, it became a mutual protection to the adverse parties.

"Hurrah! for the Royal Irish!" again shouted M'Fuse, rushing up the trifling ascent, which was but of little more than his own height.

"Hurrah!" repeated Pitcairn, waving his sword on another angle of the work—"the day's our own!"

One more sheet of flame issued out of the bosom of the work, and all those brave men, who had emulated the examples of their officers, were swept away, as though a whirlwind had passed along. The grenadier gave his war-cry once more, before he pitched headlong among his enemies; while Pitcairn fell back into the arms of his own child. The cry of "Forward, 47th," rung through their ranks, and in their turn this veteran battalion gallantly mounted the ramparts. In the shallow ditch Lionel passed the expiring marine, and caught the dying and despairing look from his eyes, and in another instant he found himself in the presence of his foes. As company followed company into the defenceless redoubt, the Americans sullenly retired by its rear, keeping the bayonets of the soldiers at bay with clubbed muskets and sinewy arms. When the whole issued upon the open ground, the husbandmen received a close and fatal fire from the battalions, which were now gathering around them on three sides. A scene of wild and savage confusion then succeeded to the order of the fight, and many fatal blows were given and taken, the *mêlée* rendering the use of fire-arms nearly impossible for several minutes.

Lionel continued in advance, pressing on the footsteps of the retiring foe, stepping over many a lifeless body in his difficult progress. Notwithstanding the hurry, and vast disorder of the fray, his eye fell on the form of the graceful stranger, stretched lifeless on the parched grass, which had greedily drank his blood. Amid the ferocious

cries, and fiercer passions of the moment, the young man paused, and glanced his eyes around him, with an expression that said he thought the work of death should cease. At this instant the trappings of his attire caught the glaring eyeballs of a dying yeoman, who exerted his wasting strength to sacrifice one more worthy victim to the manes of his countrymen. The whole of the tumultuous scene vanished from the senses of Lionel at the flash of the musket of this man, and he sunk beneath the feet of the combatants, insensible of further triumph, and of every danger.

The fall of a single officer, in such a contest, was a circumstance not to be regarded ; and regiments passed over him, without a single man stooping to inquire into his fate. When the Americans had disengaged themselves from the troops, they descended into the little hollow between the two hills, swiftly, and like a disordered crowd, bearing off most of their wounded, and leaving but few prisoners in the hands of their foes. The formation of the ground favored their retreat, as hundreds of bullets whistled harmlessly above their heads ; and by the time they gained the acclivity of Bunker, distance was added to their security. Finding the field lost, the men at the fence broke away in a body from their position, and abandoned the meadows ; the whole moving in confused masses behind the crest of the adjacent height. The shouting soldiery followed in their footsteps, pouring in fruitless and distant volleys ; but on the summit of Bunker their tired platoons were halted, and they beheld the throng move fearlessly through the tremendous fire that enfiladed the low pass, as little injured as though most of them bore charmed lives.

The day was now drawing to a close. With the disappearance of their enemies, the ships and batteries ceased their cannonade ; and presently not a musket was heard in that place, where so fierce a contest had so long raged. The troops commenced fortifying the outward eminence, on which they rested, in order to maintain their barren conquest ; and nothing further remained for the achievement of the royal lieutenants, but to go and mourn over their victory.

CHAPTER XVII.

"She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?
Her eye discourses—I will answer it."—*Romeo.*

ALTHOUGH the battle of Bunker Hill was fought while the grass yet lay on the meadows, the heats of summer had been followed by the nipping frosts of November; the leaf had fallen in its hour, and the tempests and biting colds of February had succeeded, before Major Lincoln left that couch where he had been laid, when carried, in total helplessness, from the fatal heights of the peninsula. Throughout the whole of that long period, the hidden bullet had defied the utmost skill of the British surgeons; nor could all their science and experience embolden them to risk cutting certain arteries and tendons in the body of the heir of Lincoln, which were thought to obstruct the passage to that obstinate lead, which, all agreed, alone impeded the recovery of the unfortunate sufferer. This indecision was one of the penalties that poor Lionel paid for his greatness; for had it been Meriton who lingered, instead of his master, it is quite probable the case would have been determined at a much earlier hour. At length, a young and enterprising leech, with the world before him, arrived from Europe, who, possessing greater skill or more effrontery (the effects are sometimes the same) than his fellows, did not hesitate to decide at once on the expediency of an operation. The medical staff of the army sneered at this bold innovator, and at first were content with such silent testimonials of their contempt. But when the friends of the patient, listening, as usual, to the whisperings of hope, consented that the confident man of probes should use his instruments, the voices of his contemporaries became not only loud, but clamorous. There was a day or two when even the watch-worn and jaded subalterns of the army forgot the dangers and hardships of the siege, to attend with demure and instructed countenances to the unintelligible jargon of the "Medici" of their camp; and men grew pale, as they listened, who had never been known to exhibit any symptoms of the disgraceful passion before their more acknowledged enemies. But when it became known that the ball was safely extracted, and the patient was pronounced convalescent, a calm succeeded, that was much

more portentous to the human race than the preceding tempest ; and in a short time the daring practitioner was universally acknowledged to be the founder of a new theory. The degrees of M.D. were showered upon his honored head from half the learned bodies in Christendom, while many of his enthusiastic admirers and imitators became justly entitled to the use of the same magical symbols, as annexments to their patronymics, with the addition of the first letter in the alphabet. The ancient reasoning was altered to suit the modern facts, and before the war was ended, some thousands of the servants of the crown, and not a few of the patriotic colonists, were thought to have died, scientifically, under the favor of this important discovery.

We might devote a chapter to the minute promulgation of such an event, had not more recent philosophers long since upset the practice, (in which case the theory seems to fall, as a matter of course,) by a renewal of those bold adventures, which teach us, occasionally, something new in the anatomy of man ; as in the science of geography, sealers of New England have been able to discover *Terra Australis*, where Cook saw nothing but water ; or Parry finds veins and arteries in that part of the American continent, which had so long been thought to consist of worthless cartilage.

Whatever may have been the effects of the operation on the surgical science, it was healthful, in the first degree, to its subject. For seven weary months Lionel lay in a state in which he might be said to exist, instead of live, but little conscious of surrounding occurrences ; and, happily for himself, nearly insensible to pain and anxiety. At moments the flame of life would apparently glimmer like the dying lamp, and then both the fears and hopes of his attendants were disappointed, as the patient dropped again into that state of apathy in which so much of his time was wasted. From an erroneous opinion of his master's sufferings, Meriton had been induced to make a free use of soporifics, and no small portion of Lionel's insensibility was produced by an excessive use of that laudanum, for which he was indebted to the mistaken humanity of his valet. At the moment of the operation, the adventurous surgeon had availed himself of the same stupefying drug, and many days of dull, heavy, and alarming apathy succeeded, before his system, finding itself relieved from its unnatural inmate, resumed its healthful func-

tions, and began to renew its powers. By a singular good fortune his leech was too much occupied by his own novel honors, to follow up his success, *secundem artem*, as a great general pushes a victory to the utmost ; and that matchless doctor, Nature, was permitted to complete the cure.

When the effects of the anodynes had subsided, the patient found himself entirely free from uneasiness, and dropped into a sweet and refreshing sleep, that lasted for many hours without interruption. He awoke a new man ; with his body renovated, his head clear, and his recollections, though a little confused and wandering, certainly better than they had been since the moment when he fell in the *mêlée* on Breed's. This restoration to all the nobler properties of life occurred about the tenth hour of the day ; and as Lionel opened his eyes, with understanding in their expression, they fell upon the cheerfulness which a bright sun, assisted by the dazzling light of the masses of snow without, had lent to every object in his apartment. The curtains of the windows had been opened, and every article of the furniture was arranged with a neatness that manifested the studied care which presided over his illness. In one corner, it is true, Meriton had established himself in an easy-chair, with an arrangement of attitude which spoke more in favor of his consideration for the valet than the master, while he was comforting his faculties for a night of watchfulness, by the sweet, because stolen, slumbers of the morning.

A flood of recollections broke into the mind of Lionel together, and it was some little time before he could so far separate the true from the imaginary, as to attain a tolerably clear comprehension of what had occurred in the little age he had been dozing. Raising himself on one elbow, without difficulty, he passed his hand once or twice slowly over his face, and then trusted his voice in a summons to his man. Meriton started at the well-known sounds, and after diligently rubbing his eyes, like one who awakes by surprise, he arose and gave the customary reply.

"How now, Meriton !" exclaimed Major Lincoln ; "you sleep as sound as a recruit on post, and I suppose you have been stationed like one, with twice-told orders to be vigilant."

The valet stood with open mouth, as if ready to devour his master's words with more senses than one, and then, as Lionel concluded, passed his hands in quick succession

over his eyes as before, with a very different object, ere he answered—

“Thank God, sir, thank God! you look like yourself once more, and we shall live again as we used to. Yes, yes, sir—you’ll do now—you’ll do this time. That’s a miracle of a man, is the great Lon’non surgeon! and now we shall go back to Soho, and live like civilizers. Thank God, sir, thank God! you smile again, and I hope if anything should go wrong you’ll soon be able to give me one of those awful looks that I am so used to, and which makes my heart jump into my mouth, when I know I’ve been forgetful!”

The poor fellow, in whom long service had created a deep attachment to his master, which had been greatly increased by the solicitude of a nurse, was compelled to cease his unconnected expressions of joy, while he actually wept. Lionel was too much affected by this evidence of feeling to continue the dialogue, for several minutes; during which time he employed himself in putting on part of his attire, assisted by the gulping valet, when, drawing his robe-de-chambre around his person, he leaned on the shoulder of his man, and took the seat which the other had so recently quitted.

“Well, well, Meriton, that will do,” said Lionel, giving a deep hem, as though his breathing was obstructed; “that will do, silly fellow; I trust I shall live to give you many a frown, and some few guineas, yet.—I have been shot, I know——”

“Shot, sir!” interrupted the valet—“you have been downright and unlawfully murdered! you were first shot, and then baggoneted, and after that a troop of horse rode over you. I had it from one of the Royal Irish, who lay by your side the whole time, and who now lives to tell of it—a good honest fellow is Terence, and if such a thing was possible that your honor was poor enough to need a pension, he would cheerfully swear to your hurts at the King’s Bench, or War-office; Bridewell, or St. James’, it’s all one to the like of him.”

“I dare say, I dare say,” said Lionel, smiling, though he mechanically passed his hand over his body, as his valet spoke of the bayonet—“but the poor fellow must have transferred some of his own wounds to my person—I own the bullet, but object to the cavalry and the steel.”

“No, sir, I own the bullet, and it shall be buried with me in my dressing-box, at the head of my grave,” said

Meriton, exhibiting the flattened bit of lead, exultingly, in the palm of his hand—"it has been in my pocket these thirteen days, after tormenting your honor for six long months, hid in the what d'ye call 'em muscles, away behind the thingummy artery. But snug as it was, we got it out! He is a miracle is the great Lon'non surgeon!"

Lionel reached over to his purse, which Meriton had placed regularly on the table, each morning, in order to remove it again at night, and, dropping several guineas in the hand of his valet, said—

"So much lead must need some gold to sweeten it. Put up the unseemly thing, and never let me see it again!"

Meriton coolly took the opposing metals, and after glancing his eyes at the guineas, with a readiness that embraced their amount in a single look, he dropped them carelessly into one pocket, while he restored the lead to the other with an exceeding attention to its preservation. He then turned his hand to the customary duties of his station.

"I remember well to have been in a fight on the heights of Charlestown, even to the instant when I got my hurt," continued his master—"and I even recollect many things that have occurred since; a period which appears like a whole life to me. But after all, Meriton, I believe my ideas have not been remarkable for their clearness."

"Lord, sir, you have talked to me, and scolded me, and praised me, a hundred and a hundred times over again; but you have never scolded as sharp like as you can, nor have you ever spoken and looked as bright as you do this morning!"

"I am in the house of Mrs. Lechmere," again continued Lionel, examining the room—"I know this apartment, and those private doors too well to be mistaken."

"To be sure you are, sir; Madam Lechmere had you brought here from the field to her own house, and one of the best it is in Boston, too: and I expect that madam would somehow lose her title to it, if anything serious should happen to us!"

"Such as a bayonet, or a troop of horse! but why do you fancy any such thing?"

"Because, sir, when madam comes here of an afternoon, which she did daily, before she sickened, I heard her very often say to herself, if you should be so unfortunate as to die, there would be an end to all her hopes of her house."

"Then it is Mrs. Lechmere who visits me daily," said

Lionel, thoughtfully ; "I have recollections of a female form hovering around my bed, though I had supposed it more youthful and active than that of my aunt."

"And you are quite right, sir—you have had such a nurse the whole time as is seldom to be met with. For making a posset or a gruel, I'll match her with the oldest woman in the wards of Guy's ; and, to my taste, the best barkeeper at the Lon'non is a fool to her at a negus."

"These are high accomplishments, indeed ! and who may be their mistress ?"

"Miss Agnus, sir ; a rare good nurse is Miss Agnus Danforth ! though in point of regard to the troops, I shouldn't presume to call her at all distinguishable."

"Miss Danforth," repeated Lionel, dropping his expecting eyes, in disappointment, from the face of Meriton to the floor—"I hope she has not sustained all this trouble on my account alone. There are women enough in the establishment—one would think such offices might be borne by the domestics—in short, Meriton, was she without an assistant in all these little kindnesses ?"

"I helped her, you know, sir, all I could ; though my neguses never touch the right spot, like Miss Agnus's."

"One would think, by your account, that I have done little else than guzzle port wine for six months," said Lionel, pettishly.

"Lord, sir, you wouldn't drink a thimbleful from a glass, often ; which I always took for a bad symptom ; for I'm certain 'twas no fault of the liquor, if it wasn't drunk."

"Well, enough of your favorite beverage ! I sicken at the name already—but, Meriton, have not others of my friends called to inquire after my fate ?"

"Certainly, sir—the commander-in-chief sends an aid or a servant every day ; and Lord Percy left his card more than——"

"Poh ! these are calls of courtesy ; but I have relatives in Boston—Miss Dynevor, has she left the town ?"

"No, sir," said the valet, very coolly resuming the duty of arranging the vials on the night-table ; "she is not much of a moving body, is that Miss Cecil."

"She is not ill, I trust ?" demanded Lionel.

"Lord, it goes through me, part joy and part fear, to hear you speak again so quick and brisk, sir ! No, she isn't downright ailing, but she hasn't the life and knowledge of things, as her cousin, Miss Agnus."

"Why do you think so, fellow ?"

"Because, sir, she is mopy, and don't turn her hand to any of the light lady's work in the family. I have seen her sit in that very chair, where you are now, sir, for hours together, without moving; unless it was some nervous start when you groaned, or breathed a little upward through your honor's nose—I have taken it into my consideration, sir, that she poetizes; at all events, she likes what I call quietude!"

"Indeed!" said Lionel, pursuing the conversation with an interest that would have struck a more observant man as remarkable—"what reason have you for suspecting Miss Dynevor of manufacturing rhymes?"

"Because, sir, she has often a bit of paper in her hand; and I have seen her read the same thing over and over again, till I'm sure she must know it by heart; which your poetizers always do with what they writes."

"Perhaps it was a letter?" cried Lionel, with a quickness that caused Meriton to drop a vial he was dusting, at the expense of its contents.

"Bless me, master Lionel, how strong, and like old times you speak!"

"I believe I am amazed to find you know so much of the divine art, Meriton."

"Practice makes perfect, you know, sir," said the simpering valet—"I can't say I ever did much in that way, though I wrote some verses on a pet pig, as died down at Ravenscliffe, the last time we was there; and I got considerable eclaw for a few lines on a vase which lady Bab's woman broke one day, in a scuffle when the foolish creature said as I wanted to kiss her; though all that knows me, knows that I needn't break vases to get kisses from the like of her!"

"Very well," said Lionel; "some day, when I am stronger, I may like to be indulged with a perusal—go now, Meriton, to the larder, and look about you; I feel the symptoms of returning health grow strong upon me."

The gratified valet instantly departed, leaving his master to the musings of his own busy fancy.

Several minutes passed away before the young man raised his head from the hand that supported it, and then it was only done when he thought he heard a light footstep near him. His ear had not deceived him, for Cecil Dynevor herself stood within a few feet of the chair, which concealed, in a great measure, his person from her view. It was apparent, by her attitude and her tread, that she

expected to find the sick where she had seen him last, and where, for so many dreary months, his listless form had been stretched in apathy. Lionel followed her graceful movements with his eyes, and as the airy band of her morning cap waved aside at her own breathing, he discovered the unnatural paleness that was seated on her speaking features. But when she drew the folds of the bed-curtains, and missed the invalid, thought is not quicker than the motion with which she turned her light person towards the chair. Here she encountered the eyes of the young man, beaming on her with delight, and expressing all that animation and intelligence, to which they had so long been strangers. Yielding to the surprise and the gush of her feelings, Cecil flew to his feet, and clasping one of his extended hands in both her own, she cried—

“Lionel, dear Lionel, you are better! God be praised, you look well again!”

Lionel gently extricated his hand from the warm and unguarded pressure of her soft fingers, and drew forth a paper which she had unconsciously committed to his keeping.

“This, dearest Cecil,” he whispered to the blushing maiden, “this is my own letter, written when I knew my life to be at imminent hazard, and speaking the purest thoughts of my heart—tell me, then, it has not been thus kept for nothing?”

Cecil dropped her face between her hands for a moment, in burning shame, and then, as all the emotions of the moment crowded around her heart, she yielded to them as a woman, and burst into a paroxysm of tears. It is needless to dwell on those consoling and seducing speeches of the young man, which soon succeeded in luring his companion not only from her sobs, but even from her confusion, and permitted her to raise her beautiful countenance to his ardent gaze, bright and confiding as his fondest wishes could have made it.

The letter of Lionel was too direct, not to save her pride, and it had been too often perused for a single sentence to be soon forgotten. Besides, Cecil had watched over his couch too fondly and too long, to indulge in any of those little coquetries which are sometimes met with in similar scenes. She said all that an affectionate, generous, and modest female would say on such an occasion; and, it is certain, that, well as Lionel looked on waking, the little she uttered had the effect to improve his appearance tenfold.

"And you received my letter on the morning after the battle?" said Lionel, leaning fondly over her, as she still, unconsciously, kneeled by his side.

"Yes—yes—it was your order that it should be sent to me only in case of your death; but for more than a month you were numbered as among the dead by us all.—Oh! what a month was that!"

"'Tis past, my sweet friend, and, God be praised, I may now look forward to health and happiness."

"God be praised, indeed," murmured Cecil, the tears again rushing to her eyes—"I would not live that month over again, Lionel, for all that this world can offer!"

"Dearest Cecil," he replied, "I can only repay this kindness and suffering on my account, by shielding you from the rude contact of the world, even as your father would protect you, were he again in being."

She looked up in his face with all the soul of a woman's confidence beaming in her eyes, as she answered—

"You will, Lincoln, I know you will—you have sworn it, and I should be a wretch to doubt you."

He drew her unresisting form into his arms, and folded her to his bosom. In another moment a noise, like one ascending the stairs, was heard through the open door of the room, when all the feelings of her sex rushed to the breast of Cecil. She sprung on her feet, and, hardly allowing time to the delighted Lionel to note the burning tints that suffused her whole face, she darted from the room with the rapidity and lightness of an antelope.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Dead, for a ducat, dead."—*Hamlet.*

WHILE Lionel was in the confusion of feeling produced by the foregoing scene, the intruder, after a prelude of singularly heavy and loud steps, on the floor, as if some one approached on crutches, entered by a door opposite to the one through which Cecil had so suddenly vanished. At the next moment the convalescent was saluted by the full, cheerful voice of his visitor—

"God bless you, Leo, and bless the whole of us, for we need it," cried Polwarth, eagerly advancing to grasp the extended hands of his friend. "Meriton has told me that

you have got the true mark of health—a good appetite—at last. I should have broken my neck in hurrying up to wish you joy on the moment, but I just stepped into the kitchen, without Mrs. Lechmere's leave, to show her cook how to broil the steak they are warming through for you—a capital thing after a long nap, and full of nutriment—God bless you, my dear Leo; the look of your bright eye is as stimulating to my spirits as a West-India pepper is to the stomach."

Polwarth ceased shaking the hands of his reanimated friend, as with a husky voice he concluded, and turning aside under the pretence of reaching a chair, he dashed his hand before his eyes, gave a loud hem, and took his seat in silence. During the performance of this evolution, Lionel had leisure to observe the altered person of the captain. His form, though still rotund, and even corpulent, was much reduced in dimensions, while, in the place of one of those lower members, with which nature furnishes the human race, he had been compelled to substitute a leg of wood, somewhat inartificially made, and roughly shod with iron. This last sad alteration, in particular, attracted the look of Major Lincoln, who continued to gaze at it with glistening eyes, for some time after the other had established himself, to his entire satisfaction, in one of the cushioned seats of the apartment.

"I see my frame-work has caught your eye, Leo," said Polwarth, raising the wooden substitute with an air of affected indifference, and tapping it lightly with his cane. "'Tis not as gracefully cut, perhaps, as if it had been turned from the hand of master Phidias; but in a place like Boston, it is an invaluable member, inasmuch as it knows neither hunger nor cold!"

"The Americans, then, press the town," said Lionel, glad to turn the subject, "and maintain the siege with vigor?"

"They have kept us in horrible bodily terror, ever since the shallow waters toward the main-land have been frozen, and opened a path directly into the heart of the place. Their Virginian generalissimo, Washington, appeared a short time after the affair over on the other peninsula (a cursed business that, Leo!), and with him came all the trimmings of a large army. Since that time they have worn a more military front, though little else has been done, excepting an occasional skirmish, but cooping us up, like so many uneasy pigeons, in our cage."

"And Gage chafes not at the confinement?"

"Gage!—we sent him off like the soups, months ago. No, no—the moment the ministry discovered that we had come to our forks, in good earnest, they chose black Billy to preside: and now we stand at bay with the rebels, who have already learnt that our leader is not a child at the grand entertainment of war."

"Yes, seconded by such men as Clinton and Burgoyne, and supported by the flower of our troops, the position can be easily maintained."

"No position can be easily maintained, Major Lincoln," said Polwarth, promptly, "in the face of starvation, both internal and external."

"And is the case so desperate?"

"Of that you shall judge yourself, my friend. When Parliament shut the port of Boston, the colonies were filled with grumblers; and now we have opened it, and would be glad to see their supplies, the devil a craft enters the harbor willingly.—Ah! Meriton, you have the steak, I see; put it here, where your master can have it at his elbow, and bring another plate—I breakfasted but indifferently well this morning.—So we are thrown completely on our own resources. But the rebels do not let us enjoy even them in peace.—This thing is done to a turn—how charmingly the blood follows the knife!—They have gone so far as to equip privateers, who cut off our necessities, and he is a lucky man who can get a meal like the one before us."

"I had not thought the power of the Americans could have forced matters to such a pass."

"What I have mentioned, though of vital importance, is not half. If a man is happy enough to obtain the materials for a good dish—you should have rubbed an onion over these plates, Mr. Meriton—he don't know where he is to find fuel to cook it withal."

"Looking at the comforts with which I am surrounded, my good friend, I cannot but fancy your imagination heightens the distress."

"Fancy no such silly thing; for when you get abroad, you will find it but too exact. In the article of food, if we are not reduced, like the men of Jerusalem, to eating one another, we are, half the time, rather worse off, being entirely destitute of wholesome nutriment. Let but an unlucky log float by the town, among the ice, and go forth and witness the struggling and skirmishing between the

Yankees and our frozen fingers for its possession, and you will become a believer! 'Twill be lucky if the water-soaked relic of some wharf should escape without a cannonade! I don't tell you these things as a grumbler, Leo; for, thank God, I have only half as many toes as other men, to keep warmth in; and as for eating, a little will suffice for me, now my corporeal establishment is so sadly reduced."

Lionel paused in melancholy, as his friend attempted to jest at his misfortune, and then, by a very natural transition, for a young man in his situation, he proudly exclaimed—

"But we gained the day, Polwarth! and drove the rebels from their entrenchments, like chaff before a whirlwind!"

"Humph!" ejaculated the captain, laying his wooden leg carefully over its more valuable fellow, and regarding it ruefully, while he spoke—"had we made a suitable use of the bounties of nature, and turned their position, instead of running into the jaws of the beast, many might have left the field better supplied with appurtenances than are some among us at present. But dark William loves a brush, they say, and he enjoyed it, on that occasion, to his heart's content."

"He must be grateful to Clinton for his timely presence!"

"Does the devil delight in martyrdom? The presence of a thousand rebels would have been more welcome, even at that moment; nor has he smiled once on his good-natured assistant, since he thrust himself, in that unwelcome manner, between him and his enemy. We had enough to think of, with our dead and wounded, and in maintaining our conquest, or something more than black looks and unkind eyes would have followed the deed."

"I fear to inquire into the fortunes of the field, so many names of worth must be numbered in the loss."

"Twelve or fifteen hundred men are not to be knocked on the head out of such an army, and all the clever fellows escape. Gage, I know, calls the loss something like eleven hundred; but, after vamping so much about the Yankees, their prowess is not to be acknowledged in its bloom at once. A man seldom goes on one leg, but he halts a little at first, as I can say from experience—put down thirteen, Leo, as a medium, and you'll not miscalculate largely—yes, indeed, there were some brave young men amongst them! those rascally light-footed gentry, that I gave up so opportunely, were finely peppered—and there were the

Fusileers had hardly men enough left to saddle their goat!"*

"And the marines! they must have suffered heavily; I saw Pitcairn fall before me;" said Lionel, speaking with hesitation—"I greatly fear our old comrade, the grenadier, did not escape with better fortune."

"Mac!" exclaimed Polwarth, casting a furtive glance at his companion.—"Ay, Mac was not as lucky in that business as he was in Germany—he-em—Mac—had an obstinate way with him, Leo, a damn'd obstinate fellow in all military matters; but as generous a heart, and as free in sharing a mess-bill as any man in his majesty's service! I crossed the river in the same boat with him, and he entertained us with his queer thoughts on the art of war. According to Mac's notions of things, the grenadiers were to do all the fighting—a damn'd odd way with him had Mac!"

"There are few of us without peculiarities, and I could wish that none of them were more offensive than the trifling prejudices of poor Dennis M'Fuse."

"Yes, yes," added Polwarth, hemming violently, as if determined to clear his throat at every hazard; "he was a little opinionated in trifles, such as a knowledge of war, and matters of discipline; but in all important things as tractable as a child. He loved his joke, but it was impossible to have a less difficult or a more unpretending palate in one's mess! The greatest evil I can wish him is breath in his body, to live and enjoy, in these hard times, when things become excellent by comparison, the sagacious provision which his own ingenuity contrived to secure out of the cupidity of our ancient landlord, Mister Seth Sage."

"Then that notable scheme did not entirely fall to the ground," said Lionel, with a feverish desire to change the subject once more. "I had thought the Americans were too vigilant to admit the intercourse."

"Seth has been too sagacious to permit them to obstruct it. The prices acted like a soporific on his conscience, and by using your name, I believe, he has found some friend of sufficient importance amongst the rebels to protect him in his trade. His supplies make their appearance

* This regiment, in consequence of some tradition, kept a goat, with gilded horns, as a memorial. Once a year it celebrated a festival, in which the bearded quadruped acted a conspicuous part. In the battle of Bunker Hill, the corps was distinguished alike for its courage and its losses

twice a week as regularly as the meats follow the soups in a well-ordered banquet."

"You then can communicate with the country, and the country with the town! Although Washington may wink at the proceeding, I should fear the scowl of Howe."

"Why, in order to prevent suspicions of unfair practices, and at the same time to serve the cause of humanity, so the explanation reads, you know, our sapient host has seen fit to employ a fool as his agent in the intercourse—a fellow, as you may remember, of some notoriety; a certain simpleton, who calls himself Job Pray."

Lionel continued silent for many moments, during which time his recollections began to revive, and his thoughts glanced over the scenes that occurred in the first months of his residence in Boston. It is quite possible that a painful, though still general and indefinite feeling mingled with his musings; for he evidently strove to expel some such unwelcome intruder, as he resumed the discourse with a strong appearance of forced gayety.

"Ay, ay, I well remember poor Job—a fellow once seen and known, not easily to be forgotten. He used, of old, to attach himself greatly to my person, but I suppose, like the rest of the world, I am neglected when in retirement."

"You do the lad injustice; he not only makes frequent inquiries, after his slovenly manner I acknowledge, concerning your condition, but sometimes he seems better informed in the matter than myself, and can requite my frequent answers to his questions, by imparting, instead of receiving, intelligence of your improvement; more especially since the ball has been extracted."

"That should be very singular, too," said Lionel, with a still more thoughtful brow.

"Not so very remarkable, Leo, as one would at first imagine," interrupted his companion—"the lad is not wanting in sagacity, as he manifested by his choice of dishes at our old mess-table.—Ah! Leo, Leo, we may see many a discriminating palate, but where shall we go to find another such a friend!—one who could eat and joke—drink and quarrel with a man, in a breath, like poor Dennis, who is gone from among us forever!—There was a piquancy about poor Mac, that acted on the dulness of life like condiments on the natural appetite!"

Meriton, who was diligently brushing his master's coat, an office that he performed daily, though the garment had

not been worn in so long a period, stole a glance at the averted eye of the major, and understanding its expression to indicate a determined silence, he ventured to maintain the discourse in his own unworthy person.

"Yes, sir, a nice gentleman was Captain M'Fuse, and one as fought as stoutly for the king as any gentleman in the army, all agrees.—It was a thousand pities such a fine figure of a man hadn't a better idea of dress ; it isn't all, sir, as is gifted in that way ! But every body says he's a detrimental loss, though there's some officers in town, who consider so little how to wear their ornaments, that if they were to be shot, I am sure no one would miss them."

"Ah ! Meriton," cried the full-hearted Polwarth, "I see you are a youth of more observation than I had suspected ! Mac had all the seeds of a man in him, though some of them might not have come to maturity. There was a flavor in his humor, that served as a relish to every conversation in which he mingled. Did you serve the poor fellow up in handsome style, Meriton, for his last worldly exhibition ?"

"Yes, indeed, sir, we gave him as ornamental a funeral as can be seen out of Lon'non. Besides the Royal Irish, all the grenadiers was out ; that is, all as wasn't hurt, which was near half of them. As I knowed the regard Master Lionel had for the captain, I dressed him with my own hands—I trimmed his whiskers, sir, and altered his hair more in front, and seeing that his honor was getting a little gray, I threw on a sprinkling of powder, and as handsome a corpse was Captain M'Fuse as any gentleman in the army, let the other be who he may !"

The eyes of Polwarth twinkled, and he blew his nose with a noise not unlike the sound of a clarion, ere he rejoined—

"Yes, yes, time and hardships had given a touch of frost to the head of the poor fellow ; but it is a consolation to know that he died like a soldier, and not by the hands of that vulgar butcher, Nature ; and that, being dead, he was removed according to his deserts !"

"Indeed, sir," said Meriton, with a solemnity worthy of the occasion, "we gave him a great procession—a great deal can be made out of his majesty's uniform, on such festivities, and it had a wonderful look about it !—Did you speak, sir ?"

"Yes" added Lionel, impatiently ; "remove the cloth and go inquire if there be letters for me."

The valet submissively obeyed, and after a short pause the dialogue was resumed by the gentlemen on subjects of a less painful nature.

As Polwarth was exceedingly communicative, Lionel soon obtained a very general, and, to do the captain suitable justice, an extremely impartial account of the situation of the hostile forces, as well as of all the leading events that had transpired since the day of Breed's. Once or twice the invalid ventured an allusion to the spirit of the rebels, and to the unexpected energy they had discovered; but Polwarth heard them all in silence, answering only by a melancholy smile, and, in the last instance, by a significant gesture toward his unnatural supporter. Of course, after this touching acknowledgment of his former error, his friend waived the subject for others less personal.

He learned that the royal general maintained his hard-earned conquest on the opposite peninsula, where he was as effectually beleaguered, however, as in the town of Boston itself. In the meantime, while the war was conducted in earnest at the point where it commenced, hostilities had broken out in every one of those colonies, south of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, where the presence of the royal troops invited an appeal to force. At first, while the colonists acted under the impulses of the high enthusiasm of a sudden rising, they had been everywhere successful. A general army had been organized, as already related, and divisions were employed at different points to effect those conquests, which, in that early state of the struggle, were thought to be important to the main result. But the effects of their imperfect means and divided power were already becoming visible. After a series of minor victories, Montgomery had fallen in a most desperate but unsuccessful attempt to carry the impregnable fortress of Quebec; and ceasing to be the assailants, the Americans were gradually compelled to collect their resources to meet that mighty effort of the crown, which was known to be not far distant. As thousands of their fellow-subjects in the mother country manifested a strong repugnance to the war, the ministry so far submitted to the influence of that free spirit, which first took deep root in Britain, as to turn their eyes to those states of Europe, who made a trade in human life, in quest of mercenaries to quell the temper of the colonists. In consequence, the fears of the timid among the Americans were excited by rumors of the vast hordes of Russians and Germans, who

were to be poured into their country, with the fell intent to make them slaves. Perhaps no step of their enemies had a greater tendency to render them odious in the eyes of the Americans, than this measure of introducing foreigners to decide a quarrel purely domestic. So long as none but men who had been educated in those acknowledged principles of justice and law, known to both people, were admitted to the contest, there were visible points, common to each, which might render the struggle less fierce, and in time lead to a permanent reconciliation. But they reasoned not inaptly, when they asserted, that in a contest rendered triumphant by slaves, nothing but abject submission could ensue to the conquered. It was like throwing away the scabbard, and, by abandoning reason, submitting the result to the sword alone. In addition to the estrangement these measures were gradually increasing between the people of the mother-country and the colonies, must be added the change it produced among the latter in their habits of regarding the person of their prince.

During the whole of the angry discussion, and the recriminations, which preceded the drawing of blood, the colonists had admitted, to the fullest extent, not only in their language, but in their feelings, that fiction of the British law, which says "the king can do no wrong." Throughout the wide extent of an empire, on which the sun was never known to set, the English monarch could boast of no subjects more devoted to his family and person than the men who now stood in arms against what they honestly believed to be the unconstitutional encroachments of his power. Hitherto the whole weight of their resentment had justly fallen on the advisers of the prince, who himself was thought to be ignorant, as he was probably innocent, of the abuses so generally practised in his name. But as the contest thickened, the natural feelings of the man were thought to savor of the political acts he was required to sanction with his name. It was soon whispered, among those who had the best means of intelligence, that the feelings of the sovereign were deeply interested in the maintenance of what he deemed his prerogative, and the ascendancy of that body of the representatives of his empire, which he met in person and influenced by his presence. Ere long this opinion was rumored abroad, and as the minds of men began to loosen from their ancient attachments and prejudices, they confounded, by a very natural feeling, the head with the mem-

bers; forgetting that "Liberty and Equality" formed no part of the trade of princes. The name of the monarch was daily falling into disrepute; and as the colonial writers ventured to allude more freely to his person and power, the glimmerings of that light were seen, which was a precursor of the rise of "the stars of the west" among the national symbols of the earth. - Until then, few had thought, and none had ventured to speak openly, of independence, though events had been silently preparing the colonists for such a final measure.

Allegiance to the prince was the last and only tie to be severed; for the colonies already governed themselves in all matters, whether of internal or foreign policy, as effectually as any people could, whose right to do so was not generally acknowledged. But as the honest nature of George III. admitted of no disguise, mutual disgust and alienation were the natural consequences of the reaction of sentiment between the prince and his western people.*

All this, and much more of minute detail, was hastily commented on by Polwarth, who possessed, in the midst of his epicurean propensities, sterling good sense, and great integrity of intention. Lionel was chiefly a listener, nor did he cease the greedy and interesting employment until warned by his weakness, and the stroke of a neighboring clock, that he was trespassing too far on prudence. His friend then assisted the exhausted invalid to his bed, and after giving him a world of good advice, together with a warm pressure of the hand, he stumped his way out of the room, with a noise that brought, at every tread, an echo from the heart of Major Lincoln.

CHAPTER XIX.

"God never meant that man should scale the heavens
By strides of human wisdom."—COWPER.

A VERY few days of gentle exercise in the bracing air of the season, were sufficient to restore the strength of the invalid, whose wounds had healed while he lay slumbering under the influence of the anodynes prescribed by his

* NOTE.—The prejudices of the King of England were unavoidable in his insulated situation, but his virtues and integrity were exclusively the property of the man. His speech to our first minister after the peace cannot be too often recorded. "I was the last man in my kingdom to acknowledge your independence, and I shall be the last to violate it."

leech. Polwarth, in consideration of the dilapidated state of his own limbs, together with the debility of Lionel, had so far braved the ridicule of the army, as to set up one of those comfortable and easy conveyances, which, in the good old times of colonial humility, were known by the quaint and unpretending title of tom-pungs. To equip this establishment, he had been compelled to impress one of the fine hunters of his friend. The animal had been taught, by virtue of much training from his groom, aided a little, perhaps, by the low state of the garners of the place, to amble through the snow as quietly as if he were conscious of the altered condition of his master's health. In this safe vehicle the two gentlemen might be seen daily, gliding along the upper streets of the town, and moving through the winding paths of the common, receiving the congratulations of their friends; or, in their turn, visiting others, who, like themselves, had been wounded in the murderous battle of the preceding summer, but who, less fortunate than they, were still compelled to submit to the lingering confinement of their quarters.

It was not difficult to persuade Cecil and Agnes to join in many of their short excursions, though no temptation could induce the latter to still the frown that habitually settled on her beautiful brow, whenever chance or intention brought them in contact with any of the gentlemen of the army. Miss Dynevor was, however, much more conciliating in her deportment, and even, at times, so gracious as to incur the private reproaches of her friend.

"Surely, Cecil, you forget how much our poor countrymen are suffering in their miserable lodgings without the town, or you would be less prodigal of your condescension to these butterflies of the army," cried Agnes, pettishly, while they were uncloaking after one of these rides, during which the latter thought her cousin had lost sight of that tacit compact, by which most of the women of the colonies deemed themselves bound to exhibit their feminine resentments to their invaders.—"Were a chief from our own army presented to you, he could not have been received in a sweeter manner than you bestowed your smile to-day on that Sir Digby Dent!"

"I can say nothing in favor of its sweetness, my acid cousin, but *that* Sir Digby Dent is a gentleman——"

"A gentleman! yes—so is every Englishman who wears a scarlet coat, and knows how to play off his airs in the colonies!"

"And as I hope I have some claims to be called a lady," continued Cecil, quietly, "I do not know why, in the little intercourse we have, I should be rude to him."

"Cecil Dynevor!" exclaimed Agnes, with a sparkling eye, and with a woman's intuitive perception of the other's motives, "all Englishmen are not Lionel Lincolns."

"Nor is Major Lincoln an Englishman," returned Cecil, laughing, while she blushed; "though I have reason to think that Captain Polwarth may be."

"Silly, child, silly; the poor man has paid the penalty of his offence, and is to be regarded with pity."

"Have a care, my coz.—Pity is one of a large connection of gentle feelings; when you once admit the first-born, you may leave open your doors to the whole family."

"Now that is exactly the point in question, Cecil—because you esteem Major Lincoln, you are willing to admire Howe and all his myrmidons; but I can pity, and still be firm."

"Le bon temps viendra!"

"Never," interrupted Agnes, with a warmth that prevented her perceiving how much she admitted—"never, at least under the guise of a scarlet coat."

Cecil smiled, but having completed her toilet, she withdrew without making any reply.

Such little discussions, enlivened more or less by the peculiar spirit of Agnes, were of frequent occurrence, though the eye of her cousin became daily more thoughtful, and the indifference with which she listened was more apparent in each succeeding dialogue.

In the meantime, the affairs of the siege, though conducted with extreme caution, amounted only to a vigilant blockade.

The Americans lay by thousands in the surrounding villages, or were huddled in strong bands nigh the batteries which commanded the approaches to the place. Notwithstanding their means had been greatly increased by the capture of several vessels, loaded with warlike stores, as well as by the reduction of two important fortresses toward the Canadian frontiers, they were still too scanty to admit of that wasteful expenditure, which is the usual accompaniment of war. In addition to their necessities, as a reason for forbearance, might also be mentioned the feelings of the colonists, who were anxious, in mercy to themselves, to regain their town as little injured as possible. On the other hand, the impression made by the battle of

Bunker Hill was still so vivid as to curb the enterprise of the royal commanders, and Washington had been permitted to hold their powerful forces in check, by an untrained and half-armed multitude, that was, at times, absolutely destitute of the means of maintaining even a momentary contest.

As, however, a show of hostilities was maintained, the reports of cannon were frequently heard, and there were days when skirmishes between the advance parties of the two hosts brought on more heavy firings, which continued for longer periods. The ears of the ladies had long been accustomed to these rude sounds, and as the trifling loss which followed was altogether confined to the outworks, they were listened to with but little or no terror.

In this manner a fortnight flew swiftly away, without an incident to be related. One fine morning, at the end of that period, Polwarth drove into the little court-yard of Mrs. Lechmere's residence, with all those knowing flourishes he could command, and which, in the year 1775, were thought to indicate the greatest familiarity with the properties of a tom-pung. In another minute his wooden member was heard in the passage, timing his steps, as he approached the room where the rest of the party were waiting his appearance. The two cousins stood wrapped in furs, with their smiling faces blooming beneath double rows of lace to soften the pictures, while Major Lincoln was in the act of taking his cloak from Meriton, as the door opened for the admission of the captain.

"What, already dished!" exclaimed the good-natured Polwarth, glancing his eyes from one to the other—"so much the better; punctuality is the true leaven of life—a good watch is as necessary to the guest as the host, and to the host as his cook. Miss Agnes, you are amazingly murderous to-day! If Howe expects his subalterns to do their duty, he should not suffer you to go at large in his camp."

The fine eye of Miss Danforth sparkled as he proceeded, but happening to fall on his mutilated person, its expression softened, and she was content with answering with a smile—

"Let your general look to himself; I seldom go abroad but to espy his weakness!"

The captain gave an expressive shrug of his shoulder, and turning aside to his friend, said in an undertone—

"You see how it is, Major Lincoln; ever since I have been compelled to serve myself up, like a turkey from

yesterday's dinner, with a single leg, I have not been able to get a sharp reply from the young woman—she has grown an even-tempered, tasteless morsel! and I am like a two-prong fork; only fit for carving! well, I care not how soon they cut me up entirely, since she has lost her piquancy—but shall we to the church?"

Lionel looked a little embarrassed, and fingered a paper he held in his hand, for a moment, before he handed it to the other for his perusal.

"What have we here?" continued Polwarth—"Two officers, wounded in the late battle, desire to return thanks for their recovery'—hum—hum—hum—two?—yourself, and who is the other?"

"I had hoped it would be my old companion and school-fellow?"

"Ha! what, me!" exclaimed the captain, unconsciously elevating his wooden leg, and examining it with a rueful eye—"umph! Leo, do you think a man has a particular reason to be grateful for the loss of a leg?"

"It might have been worse——"

"I don't know," interrupted Polwarth, a little obstinately—"there would have been more symmetry in it, if it had been both."

"You forget your mother," continued Lionel, as though the other had not spoken; "I am very sure it will give her heart-felt pleasure."

Polwarth gave a loud hem, rubbed his hand over his face once or twice, gave another furtive glance at his solitary limb, and then answered with a little tremor in his voice—

"Yes, yes—I believe you are quite right—a mother can love her child, though he should be chopped into mince-meat! The sex get that generous feeling after they are turned of forty—it's your young woman that is particular about proportions and correspondents."

"You consent, then, that Meriton shall hand in the request, as it reads?"

Polwarth hesitated a single instant longer, and then, as he remembered his distant mother, (for Lionel had touched the right chord,) his heart melted within him.

"Certainly, certainly—it might have been worse as it was with poor Dennis—ay, let it pass for two; it shall go hard, but I find a knee to bend on the occasion. Perhaps, Leo, when a certain young lady sees I can have a 'Te Deum' for my adventure she may cease to think me such an object of pity as at present."

Lionel bowed in silence, and the captain, turning to Agnes, conducted her to the sleigh with a particularly lofty air, that he intended should indicate his perfect superiority to the casualties of war. Cecil took the arm of Major Lincoln, and the whole party were soon seated in the vehicle that was in waiting.

Until this day, which was the second Sunday since his reappearance, and the first on which the weather permitted him to go abroad, Lionel had no opportunity to observe the altered population of the town. The inhabitants had gradually left the place, some clandestinely, and others under favor of passes from the royal general, until those who remained were actually outnumbered by the army and its dependents. As the party approached the "King's Chapel," the street was crowded by military men, collected in groups, who indulged in thoughtless merriment, reckless of the wounds their light conversation inflicted on the few townsmen, who might be seen moving towards the church, with deportments suited to the solemnity of their purpose, and countenances severely chastened by a remembrance of the day, and its serious duties. Indeed, so completely had Boston lost that distinctive appearance of sobriety, which had ever been the care and pride of its people, in the levity of a garrison, that even the immediate precincts of the temple were not protected from the passing jest or rude mirth of the gay and unreflecting, at an hour when a quiet was wont to settle on the whole province, as deep as if Nature had ceased her ordinary functions to unite in the worship of man. Lionel observed the change with mortification, nor did it escape his uneasy glances, that his two female companions concealed their faces in their muffs, as if to exclude a view that brought still more painful recollections to minds early trained in the reflecting habits of the country.

When the sleigh drew up before the edifice, a dozen hands were extended to assist the ladies in their short but difficult passage into the heavy portico. Agnes coldly bowed her acknowledgments, observing, with an extremely equivocal smile, to one of the most assiduous of the young men—

"We, who are accustomed to the climate, find no difficulty in walking on ice, though to you foreigners it may seem so hazardous."—She then bowed, and walked gravely into the bosom of the church, without deigning to bestow another glance to her right hand or her left.

The manner of Cecil, though more chastened and feminine, and consequently more impressive, was equally reserved. Like her cousin, she proceeded directly to her pew, repulsing the attempts of those who wished to detain her a moment in idle discourse, by a lady-like propriety that checked the advance of all who approached her. In consequence of the rapid movement of their companions, Lionel and Polwarth were left among the crowd of officers who thronged the entrance of the church. The former moved up within the colonnade, and passed from group to group, answering and making the customary inquiries of men engaged in the business of war. Here, three or four veterans were clustered about one of those heavy columns, that were arranged in formidable show on three faces of the building, discussing, with becoming gravity, the political signs of the times, or the military condition of their respective corps. There, three or four unfledged boys, tricked in all the vain emblems of their profession, impeded the entrance of the few women who appeared under the pretence of admiration for the sex, while they secretly dwelt on the glitter of their own ornaments. Scattered along the whole extent of the entrance were other little knots ; some listening to the idle tale of a professed jester, some abusing the land in which it was their fate to serve, and others recounting the marvels they had witnessed in distant climes, and in scenes of peril which beggared their utmost powers of description.

Among such a collection it was not difficult, however, to find a few whose views were more elevated, and whose deportment might be termed less offensive, either to breeding or principles. With one of the gentlemen of the latter class Lionel was held for some time in discourse, in a distant part of the portico. At length the sounds of the organ were heard issuing from the church, and the gay parties began to separate, like men suddenly reminded why they were collected in that unusual place. The companion of Major Lincoln had left him, and he was himself following along the colonnade, which was now but thinly peopled, when his ear was saluted by a low voice, singing in a sort of nasal chant at his very elbow—

“Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market !”

Though Lionel had not heard the voice since the echoing cry had issued out of the fatal redoubt, he knew its first tones on the instant. Turning at this singular denuncia-

tion, he beheld Job Pray, erect and immovable as a statue, in one of the niches, in front of the building, whence he gave forth his warning voice, like some oracle speaking to its devotees.

"Fellow, will no peril teach you wisdom!" demanded Lionel—"how dare you brave our resentment so wantonly?"

But his questions were unheeded. The young man, whose features looked pale and emaciated, as if he had endured recent bodily disease, whose eye was glazed and vacant, and whose whole appearance was more squalid and miserable than usual, appeared perfectly indifferent to all around him. Without even altering the riveted gaze of his unmeaning eye, he continued—

"Woe unto you! for ye neither go in yourselves; neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in!"

"Art deaf, fool!" demanded Lionel.

In an instant the eye of the other was turned on his interrogator, and Major Lincoln felt a thrill pass through him, when he met the wild gleam of intelligence that lighted the countenance of the changeling, as he continued, in the same ominous tones—

"Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, is in danger of hell-fire."

For a moment Lionel stood as if spellbound, by the manner of Job, while he uttered this dreadful anathema. But the instant the secret influence ceased, he tapped the lad lightly with his cane, and bid him descend from the niche.

"Job's a prophet," returned the other, dishonoring his declaration at the same time, by losing the singular air of momentary intelligence, in his usual appearance of mental imbecility—"it's wicked to strike a prophet. The Jews stoned the prophets, and beat them too."

"Do then as I bid you—would you stay here to be beaten by the soldiers? Go now, away; after service come to me, and I will furnish you with a better coat than the garment your wear."

"Did you never read the good book," said Job, "where it tells how you mus'n't take heed for food nor raiment? Nab says when Job dies he'll go to heaven, for he gets nothing to wear, and but little to eat. Kings wear their di'mond crowns and golden flauntiness; and kings always go to the dark place."

The lad suddenly ceased, and crouching into the very bottom of his niche, he began to play with his fingers, like an infant amused with the power of exercising its own members. At the same moment Lionel turned from him, attracted by the rattling of side-arms, and the tread of many feet behind him. A large party of officers, belonging to the staff of the army, had paused to listen to what was passing. Amongst them Lionel recognized, at the first glance, two of the chieftains, who, a little in advance of their attendants, were keenly eying the singular being that was squatted in the niche. Notwithstanding his surprise, Major Lincoln detected the scowl that impended over the dark brow of the commander-in-chief, while he bowed low, in deference to his rank.

"Who is this fellow, that dare condemn the mighty of the earth to such sweeping perdition?" demanded Howe—"his own sovereign amongst the number!"

"'Tis an unfortunate being, wanting in intellect, with whom accident has made me acquainted," returned Major Lincoln; "who hardly knows what he utters, and least of all in whose presence he has been speaking."

"It is to such idle opinions, which are conceived by the designing, and circulated by the ignorant, that we may ascribe the wavering allegiance of the colonies," said the British general. "I hope you can answer for the loyalty of your singular acquaintance, Major Lincoln?"

Lionel was about to reply, with some little spirit, when the companion of the frowning chief suddenly exclaimed—

"By the feats of the feathered Hermes, but this is the identical Merry Andrew who took the flying leap from Copp's, of which I have already spoken to you.—Am I in error, Lincoln? Is not this the shouting philosopher, whose feelings were so elevated on the day of Breed's, that he could not refrain from flying, but who, less fortunate than Icarus, made his descent on terra firma?"

"I believe your memory is faithful, sir," said Lionel, answering the smile of the other—"the lad is often brought to trouble by his simplicity."

Burgoyne gave a gentle impulse to the arm he held, as if he thought the wretched being before them unworthy of further consideration; though secretly with a view to prevent an impolitic exhibition of the well-known propensity of his senior to push his notions of military ascendancy to the extreme. Perceiving by the still darkening look of the other, that he hesitated, his ready lieutenant observed—

"Poor fellow! his treason was doubly punished, by a flight of some fifty feet down the declivity of Copp's, and the mortification of witnessing the glorious triumph of his majesty's troops.—To such a wretch we may well afford forgiveness."

Howe insensibly yielded to the continued pressure of the other, and his hard features even relaxed into a scowling smile, as he said, while turning away—

"Look to your acquaintance, Major. Lincoln, or, bad as his present condition seems, he may make it worse. Such language cannot be tolerated in a place besieged. That is the word, I believe—the rebels call their mob a besieging army, do they not?"

"They do gather round our winter-quarters, and claim some such distinction——"

"It must be acknowledged they did well on Breed's too! The shabby rascals fought like true men."

"Desperately, and with some discretion," answered Burgoyne; "but it was their fortune to meet those who fought better, and with greater skill—shall we enter?"

The frown was now entirely chased from the brow of the chief, who said complacently—

"Come, gentlemen, we are tardy; unless more industrious, we shall not be in season to pray for the king, much less ourselves."

The whole party advanced a step, when a bustle in the rear announced the approach of another officer of high rank, and the second in command entered into the colonnade, followed also by the gentlemen of his family. The instant he appeared, the self-contented look vanished from the features of Howe, who returned his salute with cold civility, and immediately entered the church. The quick-witted Burgoyne again interposed, and as he made way in his turn, he found means to whisper into the ear of Clinton some well-imagined allusion to the events of that very field which had given birth to the heart-burnings between his brother generals, and had caused the feelings of Howe to be estranged from the man to whose assistance he owed so much. Clinton yielded to the subtle influence of the flattery, and followed his commander into the house of God, with a bland contentment that he probably mistook for a feeling much better suited for the place and the occasion. As the whole group of spectators, consisting of aids, secretaries, and idlers, without, immediately imitated the example of the generals, Lionel found himself alone with the changeling.

From the moment that Job discovered the vicinity of the English leader, to that of his disappearance, the lad remained literally immovable. His eye was fastened on vacancy, his jaw had fallen in a manner to give a look of utter mental alienation to his countenance ; and, in short, he exhibited the degraded lineaments and figure of a man, without his animation or intelligence. But as the last footsteps of the retiring party became inaudible, the fear, which had put to flight the feeble intellects of the simpleton, slowly left him, and raising his face, he said, in a low, growling voice—

“ Let him go out to Prospect ; the people will teach him the law ! ”

“ Perverse and obstinate simpleton ! ” cried Lionel, dragging him, without further ceremony, from the niche—“ will you persevere in that foolish cry until you are whipped from regiment to regiment for your pains ! ”

“ You promised Job the grannies shouldn’t beat him any more, and Job promised to run your ar’n’s.”

“ Ay ! but unless you learn to keep silence, boy, I shall forget my promise, and give you up to the anger of all the grannies in town.”

“ Well,” said Job, brightening in his look, like a fool in his exultation, “ they are half of them dead, at any rate ; Job heard the biggest man among ’em roar like a ravenous lion, ‘ hurrah for the Royal Irish,’ but he never spoke ag’in ; though there wasn’t any better rest for Job’s gun than a dead man’s shoulder ! ”

“ Wretch ! ” cried Lionel, recoiling from him in horror, “ are your hands then stained with the blood of M’Fuse ! ”

“ Job didn’t touch him with his hands,” returned the undisturbed simpleton—“ for he died like a dog, where he fell ! ”

Lionel stood a moment in utter confusion of thought ; but hearing the infallible evidence of the near approach of Polwarth in his tread, he said, in a hurried manner, and in a voice half choked by his emotions—

“ Go, fellow, go to Mrs. Lechmere’s, as I bid you—tell—tell Meriton to look to my fire.”

The lad made a motion towards obeying, but checking himself, he looked up into the face of the other with a piteous and suffering look, and said—

“ See, Job’s numb with cold ! Nab and Job can’t get wood now ; the king keeps men to fight for it—let Job warm his flesh a little ; his body is cold as the dead ! ”

Touched to the heart by the request, and the helpless aspect of the lad, Lionel made a silent signal of assent, and turned quickly to meet his friend. It was not necessary for Polwarth to speak, in order to apprise Major Lincoln that he had overheard part of the dialogue between him and Job. His countenance and attitude sufficiently betrayed his knowledge, as well as the effect it had produced on his feelings. He kept his eyes on the form of the simpleton, as the lad shuffled his way along the icy street, with an expression that could not easily be mistaken.

"Did I not hear the name of poor Dennis?" at length he asked.

"'Twas some of the idle boastings of the fool. But why are you not in the pew?"

"The fellow is a protégé of yours, Major Lincoln; but you may carry forbearance too far," returned Polwarth, gravely.—"I come for you, at the request of a pair of beautiful eyes, that have inquired of each one that has entered the church, this half hour, where and why Major Lincoln has tarried."

Lionel bowed his thanks, and affected to laugh at the humor of his friend, while they proceeded together to the pew of Mrs. Lechmere without further delay.

The painful reflections excited by this interview with Job, gradually vanished from the mind of Lionel, as he yielded to the influence of the solemn service of the church. He heard the difficult and suppressed breathing of the fair being who kneeled by his side, while the minister read those thanksgivings which personally concerned himself, and no little of earthly gratitude mingled with the loftier aspirations of the youth, as he listened. He caught the timid glance of the soft eye from behind the folds of Cecil's veil, as they rose, and he took his seat as happy as an ardent young man might well be fancied, under the consciousness of possessing the best affections of a female so youthful, so lovely, and so pure.

Perhaps the service was not altogether so consoling to the feelings of Polwarth. As he recovered his solitary foot again, with some little difficulty, he cast a very equivocal glance at his dismembered person, hemmed aloud, and finished with a rattling of his wooden leg about the pew, that attracted the eyes of the whole congregation, as if he intended the ears of all present should bear testimony in whose behalf their owners had uttered their extraordinary thanksgivings.

The officiating minister was far too discreet to vex the attention of his superiors with any prolix and unwelcome exhibitions of the Christian's duty. The impressive delivery of his text required one minute. Four were consumed in the exordium. The argument was ingeniously condensed into ten more ; and the peroration of his essay was happily concluded in four minutes and a half ; leaving him the satisfaction of knowing, as he was assured by fifty watches, and twice that number of contented faces, that he had accomplished his task by half a minute within the orthodox period.

For this exactitude he doubtless had his reward. Among other testimonials in his favor, when Polwarth shook his hand to thank him for his kind offices in his own behalf, he found room for a high compliment to the discourse, concluding by assuring the flattered divine, "that, in addition to its other great merits, it was done in beautiful time !"

CHAPTER XX.

"Away ; let naught to love displeasing,
My Winifreda, move your care :
Let naught delay the heavenly blessing,
Nor squeamish pride, nor gloomy fear."—*Anonymous.*

It was perhaps fortunate for the tranquillity of all concerned, that, during this period of their opening confidence, the person of Mrs. Lechmere came not between the bright image of purity and happiness that Cecil presented in each lineament and action, and the eyes of her lover. The singular, and somewhat contradictory interests that lady had so often betrayed in the movements of her young kinsman, were no longer visible to awaken his slumbering suspicions. Even those inexplicable scenes, in which his aunt had so strangely been an actor, were forgotten in the engrossing feelings of the hour ; or, if remembered at all, were only suffered to dim the pleasing pictures of his imagination, as an airy cloud throws its passing shadows across some cheerful and lovely landscape. In addition to those very natural auxiliaries, love and hope, the cause of Mrs. Lechmere had found a very powerful assistant, in the bosom of Lionel, through an accident which had confined her, for a long period, not only to her apartment, but to her bed.

On that day, when the critical operation was performed on the person of Major Lincoln, his aunt was known to have awaited the result in intense anxiety. As soon as the favorable termination was reported to her, she hastened toward his room with an unguarded eagerness, which, added to the general infirmities of her years, had nearly cost the price of her life. Her foot became entangled in her train, in ascending the stairs, but disregarding the warning cry of Agnes Danforth, with that sort of reckless vehemence that sometimes broke through the formal decorum of her manners, she sustained, in consequence, a fall that might well have proved fatal to a much younger woman. The injury she received was severe and internal; and the inflammation, though not high, was sufficiently protracted to arouse the apprehensions of her attendants. The symptoms were, however, now abating, and her recovery no longer a matter of question.

As Lionel heard this from the lips of Cecil, the reader will not imagine the effect produced by the interest his aunt took in his welfare was at all lessened by the source whence he derived his knowledge. Notwithstanding Cecil dwelt on such a particular evidence of Mrs. Lechniere's attachment to her nephew with much earnestness, it had not escaped Major Lincoln, that her name was but seldom introduced in their frequent conversations, and never, on the part of his companion, without a guarded delicacy that appeared sensitive in the extreme. As their confidence, however, increased with their hourly communications, he began gently to lift the veil which female reserve had drawn before her inmost feelings, and to read a heart whose purity and truth would have repaid a more difficult investigation.

When the party returned from the church, Cecil and Agnes immediately hastened to the apartment of the invalid, leaving Lionel in possession of the little wainscoted parlor by himself; Polwarth having proceeded to his own quarters, with the assistance of the hunter. The young man passed a few minutes in pacing the room, musing deeply on the scene he had witnessed before the church; now and then casting a vacant look on the fanciful ornaments of the walls, among which the armorial bearings of his own name were so frequent, and in such honorable situations. At length he heard that light footstep approach, whose sound had now become too well known to be mistaken, and in another instant he was joined by Miss Dynevor.

"Mrs. Lechmere!" he said, leading her to a settee, and placing himself by her side; "you found her better, I trust?"

"So well, that she intends adventuring, this morning, an interview with your own formidable self. Indeed, Lionel, you have every reason to be grateful for the deep interest my grandmother takes in your welfare! Ill as she has been, her inquiries in your behalf were ceaseless; and I have known her refuse to answer any questions about her own critical condition until her physician had relieved her anxiety concerning yours."

As Cecil spoke, the tears rushed into her eyes, and her bloom deepened with the strength of her feelings.

"It is to you, then, that much of my gratitude is due," returned Lionel; "for, by permitting me to blend my lot with yours, I find new value in her eyes. Have you acquainted Mrs. Lechmere with the full extent of my presumption? She knows of our engagement?"

"Could I do otherwise? while your life was in peril, I confined the knowledge of my interest in your situation to my own breast; but when we were flattered with the hopes of a recovery, I placed your letter in the hands of my natural adviser, and have the consolation of knowing, that she approves of my—what shall I call it, Lionel?—would not folly be the better word?"

"Call it what you will, so you do not disavow it. I have hitherto forbore inquiring into the views of Mrs. Lechmere, in tenderness to her situation; but I may flatter myself, Cecil, that she will not reject me?"

For a single instant the blood rushed tumultuously over the fine countenance of Miss Dynevor, suffusing even her temples and forehead with its healthful bloom; but, as she cast a reproachful glance at her lover, it deserted even her cheeks, while she answered calmly, though with a slight exhibition of displeasure in her air—

"It may have been the misfortune of my grandmother to view the head of her own family with too partial eyes; but, if it be so, her reward should not be distrust. The weakness is, I dare say, very natural, though not less a weakness."

For the first time, Lionel fully comprehended the cause of that variable manner with which Cecil had received his attentions, until interest in his person had stilled her sensitive feelings. Without, however, betraying the least consciousness of his intelligence, he answered—

"Gratitude does not deserve so forbidding a name as distrust ; nor will vanity permit me to call partiality in my favor a weakness."

"The word is a good and a safe term, as applied to poor human nature," said Cecil, smiling once more with all her native sweetness, "and you may possibly overlook it, when you recollect that our foibles are sometimes hereditary."

"I pardon your unkind suspicion for that gentle acknowledgment. But I may now, without hesitation, apply to your grandmother for her consent to our immediate union?"

"You would not have your epithalamium sung, when, at the next moment, you may be required to listen to the dirge of some friend!"

"The very reason you urge against our marriage, induces me to press it, Cecil. As the season advances, this play of war must end. Howe will either break out of his bounds, and drive the Americans from the hills, or seek some other point for more active warfare. In either case you would be left in a distracted and divided country, at an age too tender for your own safety, rather the guardian than the ward of your helpless parent. Surely, Cecil, you would not hesitate to accept of my protection at such a crisis, I had almost dared to say, in tenderness to yourself, as well as to my feelings!"

"Say on," she answered ; "I admire your ingenuity, if not your argument. In the first place, however, I do not believe your general can drive the Americans from their posts so easily ; for, by a very simple process in figures, that even I understand, you may find, if one hill costs so many hundred men, that the purchase of the whole would be too dear—nay, Lionel, do not look so grave, I implore you ! Surely, surely, you do not think I would speak idly of a battle that had nearly cost your life, and—and—my happiness."

"Say on," said Lionel, instantly dismissing the momentary cloud from his brow, and smiling fondly in her anxious face ; "I admire your casuistry, and worship your feeling ; but can, also, deny your argument."

Reassured by his voice and manner, after a moment of extreme agitation, she continued, in the same playful tones as before—

"But we will suppose all the hills won, and the American chief, Washington, who, though nothing but a rebel,

is a very respectable one, driven into the country with his army at his heels ; I trust it is to be done without the assistance of the women ! Or, should Howe remove his force, as you intimate, will he not leave the town behind him ? In either case, I should remain quietly where I am ; safe in a British garrison, or safer among my countrymen."

"Cecil, you are alike ignorant of the dangers and of the rude lawlessness of war ! Though Howe should abandon the place, 'twould be only for a time ; believe me, the ministry will never yield the possession of a town like this, which has so long dared their power, to men in arms against their lawful prince."

"You have strangely forgotten the last six months, Lionel, or you would not accuse me of ignorance of the misery that war can inflict."

"A thousand thanks for the kind admission, dearest Cecil, as well as for the hint," said the young man, shifting the ground of his argument with the consistency, as well as the readiness, of a lover ; "you have owned your sentiments to me, and would not refuse to avow them again ?"

"Not one whose self-esteem will induce him to forget the weakness ; but, perhaps, I might hesitate to do such a silly thing before the world."

"I will then put it to your heart," he continued, without regarding the smiling coquetry she had affected. "Believing the best, you will admit that another battle would be no strange occurrence ?"

She raised her anxious looks to his face, but remained silent.

"We both know, at least I know, from sad experience, that I am far from being invulnerable. Now answer me, Cecil,—not as a female, struggling to support the false pride of her sex, but as a woman, generous and full of heart, like yourself,—were the events of the last six months to recur, whether would you live them over affianced in secret, or as an acknowledged wife, who might not blush to show her tenderness to the world ?"

It was not until the large drops, that glistened at his words upon the dark lashes of Miss Dynevor, were shaken from the tremulous fringes that concealed her eyes, that she looked up, blushing, into his face, and said—

"Do you not then think that I endured enough, as one who felt herself betrothed ; but that closer ties were necessary to fill the measure of my suffering ?"

"I cannot even thank you as I would for those flattering tears, until my question is plainly answered."

"Is this altogether generous, Lincoln?"

"Perhaps not in appearance, but sincerely so in truth. By heaven, Cecil, I would shelter and protect you from a rude contact with the world, even as I seek my own happiness!"

Miss Dynevor was not only confused, but distressed; she however said, in a low voice—

"You forget, Major Lincoln, that I have one to consult, without whose approbation I can promise nothing."

"Will you, then, refer the question to her wisdom? Should Mrs. Lechmere approve of our immediate union, may I say to her, that you authorize me to ask it?"

Cecil said nothing; but smiling through her tears, she permitted Lionel to take her hand in a manner that a much less sanguine man would have found no difficulty in construing into an assent.

"Come then," he cried, "let us hasten to the apartment of Mrs. Lechmere; did you not say she expected me?" She suffered him to draw her arm through his own, and lead her from the room. Notwithstanding the buoyant hopes with which Lionel conducted his companion through the passages of the house, he did not approach the chamber of Mrs. Lechmere without some inward repugnance. It was not possible to forget entirely all that had so recently passed, or to still, effectually, those dark suspicions which had been once awakened within his bosom. His purpose, however, bore him onward, and a glance at the trembling being, who now absolutely leaned on him for support, drove every consideration, in which she did not form a most prominent part, from his mind.

The enfeebled appearance of the invalid, with a sudden recollection that she had sustained so much, in consequence of her anxiety in his own behalf, so far aided the cause of his aunt, that the young man not only met her with cordiality, but with a feeling akin to gratitude.

The indisposition of Mrs. Lechmere had now continued for several weeks, and her features, aged and sunken as they were by the general decay of nature, afforded strong additional testimony of the severity of her recent illness. Her face, besides being paler and more emaciated than usual, had caught that anxious expression, which great and protracted bodily ailing is apt to leave on the human countenance. Her brow was, however, smooth and satis-

fied, unless at moments, when a slight and involuntary play of the muscles betrayed that fleeting pains continued, at short intervals, to remind her of her illness. She received her visitors with a smile that was softer and more conciliating than usual, and which the pallid and careworn appearance of her features rendered deeply impressive.

"It is kind, cousin Lionel," she said, extending her withered hand to her young kinsman, "in the sick to come thus to visit the well. For after so long apprehending the worst on your account, I cannot consent that my trifling injury should be mentioned before your more serious wounds."

"Would, madam, that you had as happily recovered from their effects as myself," returned Lionel, taking her hand, and pressing it with great sincerity. "I shall never forget that you owe your illness to anxiety for me."

"Let it pass, sir; it is natural that we should feel strongly in behalf of those we love. I have lived to see you well again, and, God willing, I shall live to see this wicked rebellion crushed." She paused; and smiling, for a moment, on the young pair who had approached her couch, she continued, "Cecil has told me all, Major Lincoln."

"No, not all, dear madam," interrupted Lionel; "I have something yet to add; and in the commencement, I will own that I depend altogether on your pity and judgment to support my pretensions."

"Pretensions is an injudicious word, cousin Lionel; where there is an equality of birth, education, and virtues, and, I may say, considering the difference in the sexes, of fortune too, it may amount to claims; but pretensions is an expression too ambiguous. Cecil, my child, go to my library; in the small, secret drawer of my *escritoire*, you will find a paper bearing your name; read it, my love, and then bring it hither."

She motioned to Lionel to be seated, and when the door had closed on the retiring form of Cecil, she resumed the conversation.

"As we are about to speak of business, the confused girl may as well be relieved, Major Lincoln. What is this particular favor that I shall be required to yield?"

"Like any other sturdy mendicant, who may have already partaken largely of your bounty, I come to beg the immediate gift of the last and greatest boon you can bestow."

"My grandchild. There is no necessity for useless re-

serves between us, cousin Lionel, for you will remember that I too am a Lincoln. Let us then speak freely, like two friends, who have met to determine on a matter equally near to the heart of each."

"Such is my earnest wish, madam.—I have been urging on Miss Dynevor the peril of the times, and the critical situation of the country, in both of which I have found the strongest reasons for our immediate union."

"And Cecil——"

"Has been like herself; kind, but dutiful. She refers me entirely to your decision, by which alone she consents to be guided."

Mrs. Lechmere made no immediate reply, but her features powerfully betrayed the inward workings of her mind. It certainly was not displeasure that caused her to hesitate, her hollow eye lighting with a gleam of satisfaction that could not be mistaken; neither was it uncertainty, for her whole countenance seemed to express rather the uncontrollable agitation, which might accompany the sudden accomplishment of long-desired ends, than any doubt as to their prudence. Gradually her agitation subsided; and as her feelings became more natural, her hard eyes filled with tears, and when she spoke, there was a softness mingled with the tremor of her voice, that Lionel had never before witnessed.

"She is a good and a dutiful child, my own, my obedient Cecil! She will bring you no wealth, Major Lincoln, that will be esteemed among your hoards, nor any proud title to add to the lustre of your honorable name; but she will bring you what is good, if not better—nay, I am sure it must be better—a pure and virtuous heart, that knows no guile!"

"A thousand and a thousand times more estimable in my eyes, my worthy aunt!" cried Lionel, melting before the touch of nature, which had so effectually softened the harsh feelings of Mrs. Lechmere; "let her come to my arms penniless, and without a name; she will be no less my wife, no less her own invaluable self."

"I spoke only by comparison, Major Lincoln, the child of Colonel Dynevor, and the granddaughter of the Lord Viscount Cardonnell, can have no cause to blush for her lineage; neither will the descendant of John Lechmere be a dowerless bride! When Cecil shall become Lady Lincoln, she need never wish to conceal the escutcheon of her own ancestors under the bloody hand of her husband's."

"May heaven long avert the hour when either of us may be required to use the symbol!" exclaimed Lionel.

"Did I not understand aright! was not your request for an instant marriage?"

"Never less in error, my dear madam; but you surely do not forget that one lives so mutually dear to us, who has every reason to hope for many years of life; and I trust, too, of happiness and reason!"

Mrs. Lechmere looked wildly at her nephew, and then passed her hand slowly before her eyes, from whence she did not withdraw them until an universal shudder had shaken the whole of her enfeebled frame.

"You are right, my young cousin," she said, smiling faintly—"I believe my bodily weakness has impaired my memory.—I was indeed dreaming of days long since past! You stood before me in the image of your desolate father, while Cecil bore that of her mother; my own long-lost, but wilful Agnes! Oh! she was my child! my child! and God has forgotten her faults in mercy to a mother's prayers!"

Lionel recoiled a step before the wild energy of the invalid's manner, in speechless amazement. A flush had passed into her pallid cheeks, and as she concluded, she clasped her hands before her, and sunk on the pillows which supported her back. Large insulated tears fell from her eyes, and, slowly moving over her wasted cheeks, dropped singly upon the counterpane. Lionel laid his hand upon the night-bell, but an expressive gesture from his aunt prevented his ringing.

"I am well again," she said—"hand me the restorative by your side."

Mrs. Lechmere drank freely from the glass, and in another minute her agitation subsided, her features settling into their rigid composure and her eye resuming its hard expression, as though nothing had occurred to disturb her usual cold and worldly look.

"You see how much better youth can endure the ravages of disease than age, by my present weakness, Major Lincoln," she continued; "let us return to other and more agreeable subjects—you have not only my consent, but my wish, that you should wed my grandchild. It is a happiness that I have rather hoped for, than dared to expect, and I will freely add, 'tis a consummation of my wishes that will render the evening of my days not only happy, but blessed!"

"Then, dearest madam, why should it be delayed?—no one can say what a day may bring forth, at such a time as this, and the moment of bustle and action is not the hour to register the marriage vows."

After musing a moment, Mrs. Lechmere replied—

"We have a good and holy custom in this religious province, of choosing the day which the Lord has set apart for his own exclusive worship, as that on which to enter into the honorable state of matrimony. Choose, then, between this or the next Sabbath for your nuptials."

Whatever might be the ardor of the young man, he was a little surprised at the shortness of the former period; but the pride of his sex would not admit of any hesitation.

"Let it be this day, if Miss Dynevor can be brought freely to consent."

"Here then she comes, to tell you that, at my request, she does. Cecil, my own sweet child, I have promised Major Lincoln that you will become his wife this day."

Miss Dynevor, who had advanced into the centre of the room, before she heard the purport of this speech, stopped short, and stood like a beautiful statue, expressing astonishment and dismay. Her color went and came with alarming quickness, and the paper fell from her trembling hands to her feet, which appeared riveted to the floor.

"To-day!" she repeated, in a voice barely audible—"did you say to-day, my grandmother?"

"Even to-day, my child."

"Why this reluctance, this alarm, Cecil?" said Lionel, approaching, and leading her gently to a seat. "You know the peril of the times—you have condescended to own your sentiments—consider; the winter is breaking, and the first thaw can lead to events which may entirely alter our situation."

"All these may have weight in your eyes, Major Lincoln," interrupted Mrs. Lechmere, in a voice whose marked solemnity drew the attention of her hearers; "but I have other and deeper motives. Have I not already proved the dangers and the evils of delay? Ye are young, and ye are virtuous; why should ye not be happy? Cecil, if you love and revere me, as I think you do, you will become his wife this day."

"Let me have time to think, dearest grandmother. The tie is so new and so solemn! Major Lincoln,—dear Lionel,—you are not wont to be ungenerous; I throw myself on your kindness!"

Lionel did not speak, and Mrs. Lechmere calmly answered—

“’Tis not at his, but my request, that you will comply.”

Miss Dynevor rose from her seat by the side of Lionel, with an air of offended delicacy, and said, with a mournful smile, to her lover—

“Illness has rendered my good mother timid and weak—will you excuse my desire to be alone with her?”

“I leave you, Cecil,” he said, “but if you ascribe my silence to any other motive than tenderness to your feelings, you are unjust both to yourself and me.”

She expressed her gratitude only in her looks, and he immediately withdrew, to await the result of their conversation in his own apartment. The half hour that Lionel passed in his chamber seemed half a year: but at the expiration of that short period of time, Meriton came to announce that Mrs. Lechmere desired his presence again in her room.

The first glance of her eye assured Major Lincoln that his cause had triumphed. His aunt had sunk back on her pillows, with her countenance set in a calculating and rigid expression, which indicated a satisfaction so selfish that it almost induced the young man to regret she had not failed. But when his eyes met the tearful and timid glances of the blushing Cecil, he felt that, provided she could be his without violence to her feelings, he cared but little at whose instigation she had consented.

“If I am to read my fate by your goodness, I know I may hope,” he said, advancing to her side—“if in my own deserts, I am left to despair.”

“Perhaps ’twas foolish, Lincoln,” she said, smiling through her tears, and frankly placing her hand in his, “to hesitate about a few days, when I feel ready to devote my life to your happiness. It is the wish of my grandmother that I place myself under your protection.”

“Then this evening unites us forever?”

“There is no obligation on your gallantry, that it should positively take place this very evening, if any, or the least difficulties present.”

“But none do, nor can,” interrupted Lionel. “Happily the marriage forms of the colony are simple, and we enjoy the consent of all who have any right to interfere.”

“Go, then, my children, and complete your brief arrangements,” said Mrs. Lechmere; “’tis a solemn knot that ye tie! it must, it will be happy!”

Lionel pressed the hand of his intended bride, and withdrew ; and Cecil, throwing herself into the arms of her grandmother, gave vent to her feelings in a burst of tears. Mrs. Lechmere did not repulse her child ; on the contrary, she pressed her once or twice to her heart ; but still an observant spectator might have seen that her looks betrayed more of worldly pride than of those natural emotions which such a scene ought to have excited.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Come, friar Francis, be brief ; only to the plain form of marriage."
—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

MAJOR LINCOLN had justly said, the laws regulating marriages in the Massachusetts, which were adapted to the infant state of the country, threw but few impediments in the way of the indissoluble connection. Cecil had, however, been educated in the bosom of the English Church, and she clung to its forms and ceremonies with an affection that may easily be accounted for in their solemnity and beauty. Notwithstanding the colonists often chose the weekly festival for their bridals, the rage of reform had excluded the altar from most of their temples, and it was not usual with them to celebrate their nuptials in the places of public worship. But there appeared so much of unreasonable haste, and so little of due preparation, in her own case, that Miss Dynevor, anxious to give all solemnity to an act, to whose importance she was sensibly alive, expressed her desire to pronounce her vows at that altar where she had so long been used to worship, and under that roof where she had already, since the rising of the sun, poured out the thanksgivings of her pure spirit in behalf of the man who was so soon to become her husband.

As Mrs. Lechmere had declared, that the agitation of the day, and her feeble condition, must unavoidably prevent her witnessing the ceremony, there existed no sufficient reason for not indulging the request of her grandchild, notwithstanding it was not in strict accordance with the customs of the place. But being married at the altar, and being married in public, were not similar duties ; and in order to effect the one, and avoid the other, it was necessary to postpone the ceremony until a late hour, and to clothe the whole in a cloak of mystery,

that the otherwise unembarrassed state of the parties would not have required.

Miss Dynevor made no other confidant than her cousin. Her feelings being altogether elevated above the ordinarily idle considerations, which are induced by time and preparations on such an occasion, her brief arrangements were soon ended, and she awaited the appointed moment without alarm, if not without emotion.

Lionel had much more to perform. He knew that the least intimation of such a scene would collect a curious and a disagreeable crowd around and in the church, and he therefore determined that his plans should be arranged in silence, and managed secretly. In order to prevent a surprise, Meriton was sent to the clergyman, requesting him to appoint an hour in the evening when he could give an interview to Major Lincoln. He was answered, that at any moment after nine o'clock Dr. Liturgy would be released from the duties of the day, and in readiness to receive him. There was no alternative; and ten was the time mentioned to Cecil when she was requested to meet him before the altar. Major Lincoln distrusted a little the discretion of Polwarth, and he contented himself with merely telling his friend that he was to be married that evening, and that he must be careful to repair to Tremont Street in order to give away the bride; appointing an hour sufficiently early for all the subsequent movements. His groom and his valet had their respective and separate orders, and, long before the important moment, he had everything arranged, as he believed, beyond the possibility of a disappointment.

Perhaps there was something a little romantic, if not diseased, in the mind of Lionel, that caused him to derive a secret pleasure from the hidden movements he contemplated. He was certainly not entirely free from a touch of that melancholy and morbid humor, which has been mentioned as the characteristic of his race, nor did he always feel the less happy because he was a little miserable. However, either by his activity of intellect, or that excellent training in life he had undergone, by being required to act early for himself, he had so far succeeded in quelling the evil spirit within him, as to render its influence quite imperceptible to others, and nearly so to himself. It had, in fine, left him what we have endeavored to represent him in these pages, not a man without faults, but certainly one of many high and generous virtues.

As the day drew to a close, the small family party in Tremont Street collected in their usual manner to partake of the evening repast, which was common throughout the colonies at that period. Cecil was pale, and at times a slight tremor was perceptible in the little hand which did the offices of the table ; but there was a forced calmness seated in her humid eyes, that betokened the resolution she had summoned to her assistance, in order to comply with the wishes of her grandmother. Agnes Danforth was silent and observant, though an occasional look, of more than usual meaning, betrayed what she thought of the mystery and suddenness of the approaching nuptials. It would seem, however, that the importance of the step she was about to take, had served to raise the bride above the little affectations of her sex ; for she spoke of the preparations like one who owned her interest in their completion, and who even dreaded that something might yet occur to mar them.

"If I were superstitious, and had faith in omens, Lincoln," she said, "the hour and the weather might well intimidate me from taking this step. See, the wind already blows across the endless wastes of the ocean, and the snow is driving through the streets in whirlwinds !"

"It is not yet too late to countermand my orders, Cecil," he said, regarding her anxiously ; "I have made all my movements so like a great commander, that it is as easy to retrograde as to advance."

"Would you then retreat before one so little formidable as I ?" she returned, smiling.

"You surely understand me as wishing only to change the place of our marriage. I dread exposing you and our kind cousin to the tempest, which, as you say, after sweeping over the ocean so long, appears rejoiced to find land on which to expend its fury."

"I have not misconstrued your meaning, Lionel, nor must you be mistaken in mine. I will become your wife to-night, and cheerfully too ; for what reason can I have to doubt you now, more than formerly ! But my vows must be offered at the altar."

Agnes, perceiving that her cousin spoke with a suppressed emotion that made utterance difficult, gayly interrupted her—

"And as for the snow, you know little of Boston girls, if you think an icicle has any terrors for them. I vow, Cecil, I do think you and I have been guilty, when chil-

dren, of coasting in a hand-sled, down the side of Beacon, in a worse flurry than this."

"We were guilty of many mad and silly things at ten, that might not grace twenty, Agnes."

"Lord, how like a matron she speaks already!" interrupted the other, throwing up her eyes and clasping her hands in affected admiration; "nothing short of the church will satisfy so discreet a dame, Major Lincoln! so dismiss your cares on her account, and begin to enumerate the cloaks and overcoats necessary to your own preservation."

Lionel made a lively reply, when a dialogue of some spirit ensued between him and Agnes, to which even Cecil listened with a beguiled ear. When the evening had advanced, Polwarth made his appearance, suitably attired, and with a face that was sufficiently knowing and important for the occasion. The presence of the captain reminded Lionel of the lateness of the hour, and, without delay, he hastened to communicate his plans to his friend.

At a few minutes before ten, Polwarth was to accompany the ladies in a covered sleigh to the chapel, which was not a stone's throw from their residence, where the bridegroom was to be in readiness to receive them, with the divine. Referring the captain to Meriton for further instructions, and without waiting to hear the other express his amazement at the singularity of the plan, Major Lincoln said a few words of tender encouragement to Cecil, looked at his watch, and throwing his cloak around him, took his hat, and departed.

We shall leave Polwarth endeavoring to extract the meaning of all these mysterious movements from the wilful and amused Agnes, (Cecil having retired also,) and accompany the bridegroom in his progress towards the residence of the divine.

Major Lincoln found the streets entirely deserted. The night was not dark, for a full moon was wading among the volumes of clouds, which drove before the tempest in dark and threatening masses, that contrasted singularly and wildly to the light covering of the hills and buildings of the town. Occasionally the gusts of the wind would lift eddying wreaths of fine snow from some roof, and whole squares were wrapped in mist as the frozen vapor whistled by. At times, the gale howled among the chimneys and turrets, in a steady, sullen roaring; and there were again moments when the element appeared hushed, as if its fury were expended, and winter, having worked its might, was

yielding to the steady, but insensible advances of spring. There was something in the season and the hour peculiarly in consonance with the excited temperament of the young bridegroom. Even the solitude of the streets, and the hollow rushing of the winds, the fleeting and dim light of the moon, which afforded passing glimpses of surrounding objects, and then was hid behind a dark veil of shifting vapor, contributed to his pleasure. He made his way through the snow, with that species of stern joy, to which all are indebted, at times, for moments of wild and pleasing self-abandonment. His thoughts vacillated between the purpose of the hour, and the unlooked-for coincidence of circumstances that had clothed it in a dress of such romantic mystery. Once or twice a painful and dark thought, connected with the secret of Mrs. Lechmere's life, found its way among his more pleasing visions, but it was quickly chased from his mind by the image of her who awaited his movements in such confiding faith, and with such secure and dependent affection.

As the residence of Dr. Liturgy was on the North-End, which was then one of the fashionable quarters of the town, the distance required that Lionel should be diligent, in order to be punctual to his appointment. Young, active, and full of hope, he passed along the unequal pavements with great rapidity, and had the satisfaction of perceiving by his watch, when admitted to the presence of the clergyman, that his speed had even outstripped the proverbial fleetness of time itself.

The reverend gentleman was in his study, consoling himself for the arduous duties of the day, with the comforts of a large easy-chair, a warm fire, and a pitcher filled with a mixture of cider and ginger, together with other articles that would have done credit to the knowledge of Polwarth in spices. His full and decorous wig was replaced by a velvet cap, his shoes were unbuckled, and his heels released from confinement. In short, all his arrangements were those of a man who having endured a day of labor, was resolved to prove the enjoyments of an evening of rest. His pipe, though filled, and on the little table by his side, was not lighted, in compliment to the guest he expected at that hour. As he was slightly acquainted with Major Lincoln, no introduction was necessary, and the two gentlemen were soon seated, the one endeavoring to overcome the embarrassment he felt on revealing his singular errand, and the other waiting, in no little curiosity, to

learn the reason why a member of Parliament, and the heir of ten thousand a year, should come abroad on such an unpropitious night.

At length Lionel succeeded in making the astonished priest understand his wishes, and paused to hear the expected approbation of his proposal.

Dr. Liturgy had listened with the most profound attention, as if to catch some clew to explain the mystery of the extraordinary proceeding, and when the young man concluded, he unconsciously lighted his pipe, and began to throw out large clouds of smoke, like a man who felt there was a design to abridge his pleasures, and who was consequently determined to make the most of his time.

"Married ! To be married in church ! and after the night lecture !" he muttered in a low voice between his long-drawn puffs—" 'tis my duty—certainly—Major Lincoln—to marry my parishioners——"

"In the present instance, as I know my request to be irregular, sir," interrupted the impatient Lionel, "I will make it your interest also." While speaking, he took a well-filled purse from his pocket, and, with an air of much delicacy, laid a small pile of gold by the side of the silver spectacle-case of the divine, as if to show him the difference in the value of the two metals.

Dr. Liturgy bowed his acknowledgments, and insensibly changed the stream of smoke to the opposite corner of his mouth, so as to leave the view of the glittering boon unobstructed. At the same time he raised the heel of one shoe, and threw an anxious glance at the curtained window, to inquire into the state of the weather.

"Could not the ceremony be performed at the house of Mrs. Lechmere ?" he asked ; "Miss Dynevor is a tender child, and I fear the cold air of the chapel might do her no service !"

"It is her wish to go to the altar, and you are sensible it is not my part to question her decision in such a matter."

" 'Tis a pious inclination ; though I trust she knows the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal church. The laws of the colonies are too loose on the subject of marriages, Major Lincoln ; culpably and dangerously loose !"

"But as it is not in our power to alter, my good sir, will you permit me to profit by them, imperfect as they are ?"

"Undeniably—it is part of my office to christen, to marry,

and to bury ; a duty which, I often say, covers the beginning, the middle, and the end of existence.—But permit me to help you to a little of my beverage, Major Lincoln—we call it ‘Samson,’ in Boston ; you will find the ‘Danite’ a warm companion for a February night in this climate.”

“The mixture is not inaptly named, sir,” said Lionel, after wetting his lips, “if strength be the quality most considered !”

“Ah ! you have him from the lap of a Delilah, but it is unbecoming in one of my cloth to meddle with aught of the harlot.”

He laughed at his own wit, and made a more spirituous than spiritual addition to his own glass, while he continued—

“We divide it into ‘Samson with his hair off,’ and ‘Samson with his hair on ;’ and I believe myself the most orthodox in preferring the man of strength, in his native comeliness. I pledge you, Major Lincoln ; may the middle of your days be as happy as the charming young lady you are about to espouse may well render them ; and your end, sir, that of a good churchman, and a faithful subject.”

Lionel, who considered this compliment as an indication of his success, now rose, and said a few words on the subject of their meeting in the chapel. The divine, who manifestly possessed no great relish for the duty, made sundry slight objections to the whole proceeding, which were, however, soon overcome by the arguments of the bridegroom. At length, every difficulty was happily adjusted, save one, and that the epicurean doctor stoutly declared to be a serious objection to acting in the matter. The church fires were suffered to go down, and his sexton had been taken from the chapel, that very evening, with every symptom on him of the terrible pestilence which then raged in the place, adding, by its danger, to the horrors and privations of the siege.

“A clear case of the small-pox, I do assure you, Major Lincoln,” he continued, “and contracted, without doubt, from some emissaries sent into the town for that purpose, by the wicked devices of the rebels.”

“I have heard that each party accuses the other of resorting to these unjustifiable means of annoyance,” returned Lionel ; “but, as I know our own leader to be above such baseness, I will not suspect any other man of it without proof.”

"Too charitable by half, sir—much too charitable ! But let the disease come whence it will, I fear my sexton will prove its victim."

"I will take the charge on myself of having the fires renewed," said Lionel; "the embers must yet be in the stoves, and we have still an hour of time before us."

As the clergyman was much too conscientious to retain possession of the gold without fully entitling himself to the ownership, he had long before determined to comply, notwithstanding the secret yearnings of his flesh. Their plans were now soon arranged, and Lionel, after receiving the key of the chapel, took his leave for a time.

When Major Lincoln found himself in the street again, he walked for some distance in the direction of the chapel, anxiously looking along the deserted way, in order to discover an unemployed soldier who might serve to perform the menial offices of the absent sexton. He proceeded for some distance without success; for every thing human seemed housed, even the number of lights in the windows beginning to decrease in a manner which denoted that the usual hour of rest had arrived. He had paused in the entrance of the Dock Square, uncertain where to apply for an assistant, when he caught a glimpse of the figure of a man, crouching under the walls of the old turreted warehouse, so often mentioned. Without hesitating an instant, he approached the spot, from which the figure neither moved, nor did it indeed betray any other evidence of a consciousness of his proximity. Notwithstanding the dimness of the moon, there was light enough to detect the extreme misery of the object before him. His tattered and thin attire sufficiently bespoke the motive of the stranger for seeking a shelter from the cutting winds behind an angle of the wall, while his physical wants were betrayed by the eager manner in which he gnawed at a bone that might well have been rejected from the mess of the meanest private, notwithstanding the extreme scarcity that prevailed in the garrison. Lionel forgot for a moment his present object, at this exhibition of human suffering, and with a kind voice he addressed the wretched being.

"You have a cold spot to eat your supper in, my friend," he said; "and it would seem, too, but a scanty meal."

Without ceasing to masticate his miserable nutriment, or even raising his eyes, the other said, in a growling voice—

"The king could shut up the harbor, and keep out the

ships ; but he hasn't the might to drive cold weather from Boston, in the month of March ! ”

“ As I live, Job Pray ! Come with me, boy, and I will give you a better meal, and a warmer place to enjoy it in—but first tell me ; can you procure a lantern and a light from your mother ? ”

“ You can't go in the ware'us' to-night,” returned the lad positively.

“ Is there no place at hand, then, where such things might be purchased ? ”

“ They keep them there,” said Job, pointing sullenly to a low building on the opposite side of the square, through one of the windows of which a faint light was glimmering.

“ Then take this money, and go buy them for me, without delay.”

Job hesitated with ill-concealed reluctance.

“ Go, fellow, I have instant need of them, and you can keep the change for your reward.”

The young man no longer betrayed any indisposition to go, but answered with great promptitude, for one of his imbecile mind—

“ Job will go, if you will let him buy Nab some meat with the change ? ”

“ Certainly, buy what you will with it ; and furthermore, I promise you, that neither your mother nor yourself shall want again for food or clothing.”

“ Job's a-hungry,” said the simpleton ; “ but they say hunger don't come as craving upon a young stomach as upon an old one. Do you think the king knows what it is to be a-cold and hungry ? ”

“ I know not, boy—but I know full well that if one suffering like you were before him, his heart would yearn to relieve him. Go, go, and buy yourself food too, if they have it.”

In a very few minutes Lionel saw the simpleton issuing from the house to which he had run at his bidding, with the desired lantern.

“ Did you get any food ? ” said Lionel, motioning to Job to precede him with the light—“ I trust you did not entirely forget yourself in your haste to serve me.”

“ Job hopes he didn't catch the pestilence,” returned the lad, eating at the same time voraciously of a small roll of bread.

“ Catch what ? what is it you hope you did not catch ? ”

“ The pestilence—they are full of the foul disorder in that house.”

"Do you mean the small-pox, boy?"

"Yes; some call it small-pox, and some call it the foul disorder, and some other the pestilence. The king can keep out the trade, but he can't keep out the cold and the pestilence from Boston—but when the people get the town back, they'll know what to do with it—they'll send it all to the pest-housen!"

"I hope I have not exposed you unwittingly to danger, Job—it would have been better had I gone myself; for I was inoculated for the terrible disease in my infancy."

Job, who, in expressing his sense of the danger, had exhausted the stores of his feeble mind on the subject, made no reply, but continued walking through the square, until they reached its termination, when he turned, and inquired which way he was to go.

"To the church," said Lionel, "and swiftly, lad."

As they entered Cornhill, they encountered the fury of the wind, when Major Lincoln, bowing his head, and gathering his cloak about him, followed the light which flitted along the pavement in his front. Shut out in a manner from the world by this covering, his thoughts returned to their former channel, and in a few moments he forgot where he was, or whom he was following. He was soon awakened from his abstraction by perceiving that it was necessary for him to ascend a few steps, when, supposing he had reached the place of destination, he raised his head, and unthinkingly followed his conductor into the tower of a large edifice. Immediately perceiving his mistake, by the difference of the architecture from that of the King's Chapel, he reproved the lad for his folly, and demanded why he had brought him thither.

"This is what you call a church," said Job, "though I call it a meetin'us'.—It's no wonder you don't know it—for what the people built for a temple, the king has turned into a stable!"

"A stable!" exclaimed Lionel.—Perceiving a strong smell of horses in the place, he advanced and threw open the inner door, when, to his amazement, he perceived that he stood in an area fitted for the exercises of the cavalry. There was no mistaking the place, nor its uses. The naked galleries, and many of the original ornaments, were standing; but the accommodations below were destroyed, and in their places the floor had been covered with earth, for horses and their riders to practise in the cavesson. The abominations of the place even now offended his senses, as

he stood on that spot where he remembered so often to have seen the grave and pious colonists assemble in crowds to worship. Seizing the lantern from Job, he hurried out of the building, with a disgust that even the unobservant simpleton had no difficulty in discovering. On reaching the street, his eyes fell upon the lights, and on the silent dignity of the Province House, and he was compelled to recollect, that this wanton violation of the feelings of the colonists had been practised directly under the windows of the royal governor.

"Fools, fools!" he muttered, bitterly; "when ye should have struck like men, ye have trifled as children; and ye have forgotten your manhood, and even your God, to indulge your besotted spleen!"

"And now these very horses are starving for want of hay, as a judgment upon them!" said Job, who shuffled his way industriously at the other's side.—"They had better have gone to meetin' themselves, and heard the expounding, than to set dumb beasts a rioting in a place that the Lord used to visit so often!"

"Tell me, boy, of what other act of folly and madness has the army been guilty?"

"What! hav'n't you heard of the Old North? They've made oven-wood of the grandest temple in the Bay! If they dared, they'd lay their ungodly hands on old Funnel itself!"

Lionel made no reply. He had heard that the distresses of the garrison, heightened as they were by the ceaseless activity of the Americans, had compelled them to convert many houses, as well as the church in question, into fuel. But he saw in the act nothing more than the usual recourse of a common military exigency. It was free from that reckless contempt of a people's feelings, which was exhibited in the prostitution of the ancient walls of the sister edifice, which was known throughout New England with a species of veneration, as the "Old South." He continued his way gloomily along the silent streets, until he reached the more favored temple, in which the ritual of the English Church was observed, and whose roof was rendered doubly sacred, in the eyes of the garrison, by the accidental circumstance of bearing the title of their earthly monarch.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo ; down !"—*Macbeth*.

MAJOR LINCOLN found the King's Chapel differing in every particular from the venerable, but prostituted building he had just quitted. As he entered, the light of his lantern played over the rich scarlet covering of many a pew, and glanced upon the glittering ornaments of the polished organ, which now slumbered in as chilled a silence as the dead, which lay in such multitudes within and without the massive walls. The labored columns, with their slender shafts and fretted capitals, threw shapeless shadows across the dim background, peopling the galleries and ceiling with imaginary phantoms of thin air. As this slight delusion passed away, he became sensible of the change in the temperature. The warmth was not yet dissipated which had been maintained during the different services of the day ; for, notwithstanding the wants of the town and garrison, the favored temple, where the representative of the sovereign was wont to worship, knew not the ordinary privations of the place. Job was directed to supply the dying embers of the stoves with fresh fuel, and as the simpleton well knew where to find the stores of the church, his office was performed with an alacrity that was not a little increased by his own sufferings.

When the bustle of preparation had subsided, Lionel drew a chair from the chancel, while Job crouched by the side of the quivering iron he had heated, in that attitude he was wont to assume, and which so touchingly expressed the secret consciousness he felt of his own inferiority. As the grateful warmth diffused itself over the half-naked frame of the simpleton, his head sunk upon his bosom, and he was fast falling into a slumber, like a worried hound that had at length found ease and shelter. A more active mind would have wished to learn the reasons that could induce his companion to seek such an asylum at that unseasonable hour. But Job was a stranger to curiosity ; nor did the occasional glimmerings of his mind often extend beyond those holy precepts which had been taught him with such care, before disease had sapped his faculties, or those popular principles of the time, that formed

so essential a portion of the thoughts of every New England man.

Not so with Major Lincoln. His watch told him that many weary minutes must elapse before he could expect to receive his bride ; and he disposed himself to wait, with as much patience as comported with five-and-twenty and the circumstances. In a short time the stillness of the chapel was restored, interrupted only by the passing gusts of the wind without, and the dull roaring of the furnace, by whose side Job slumbered in a state of happy oblivion.

Lionel endeavored to still his truant thoughts, and bring them in training for the solemn ceremony in which he was soon to be an actor. Finding the task too difficult, he arose, and approaching a window, looked out upon the solitude, and the whirlwinds of snow that drifted through the streets, eagerly listening for those sounds of approach which his reason told him he ought not yet to expect. Again he seated himself, and turned his eyes inquiringly about him, with a sort of inward apprehension that some one lay concealed in the surrounding gloom, with a secret design to mar his approaching happiness. There was so much of wild and feverish romance in the incidents of the day, that he found it difficult, at moments, to credit their reality, and had recourse to hasty glances at the altar, his attire, and even his insensible companion, to remove the delusion from his mind. Again he looked upward at the unsteady and huge shadows which wavered along the ceiling of the walls, and his former apprehensions of some hidden evil were revived with a vividness that amounted nearly to a presentiment. So uneasy did he become at length, under this impression, that he walked along the distant aisles, scrupulously looking into the dark pews, and throwing a scrutinizing glance behind each column, and was rewarded for his trouble by hearing the hollow echo of his own footsteps.

✓ In returning from this round, he approached the stove, and yielded to a strong desire of listening to the voice of even Job, in a moment of such morbid excitement. Touching the simpleton lightly with his foot, the other awoke with that readiness which denoted the sudden and disturbed nature of his ordinary rest.

"You are unusually dull to-night, Job," said Lionel, endeavoring to hush his uneasiness in affected pleasantry "or you would inquire the reason why I pay my visit to the church at this extraordinary hour."

"Boston folks love their meetin'us's," returned the obtuse simpleton.

"Ay!" but they love their beds, too, fellow; and one half of them are now enjoying what you seem to covet so much."

"Job loves to eat, and to be warm!"

"And to sleep too, if one may judge by your drowsiness."

"Yes, sleep is sweet; Job don't feel a-hungered when he's sleeping."

Lionel remained silent, for several moments, under a keen perception of the suffering exhibited in the touching helplessness, which marked the manner of the other, before he continued—

"But I expect to be joined soon by the clergyman, and some ladies, and Captain Polwarth."

"Job likes Captain Polwarth—he keeps a grand sight of provisions!"

"Enough of this! can you think of nothing but your stomach, boy?"

"God made hunger," said Job gloomily, "and he made food too; but the king keeps it all for his rake-hellies!"

"Well, listen, and be attentive to what I tell you.—One of the ladies who will come here is Miss Dynevor; you know Miss Dynevor, Job? the beautiful Miss Dynevor!"

The charms of Cecil had not, however, made their wonted impression on the dull eye of the idiot, who still regarded the speaker with his customary air of apathy.

"Surely, Job, you know Miss Dynevor!" repeated Lionel, with an irritability that, at any other time, he would have been the first to smile at—"she has often given you money and clothes."

"Yes; Ma'am Lechmere is her grandam!"

This was certainly one of the least recommendations his mistress possessed, in the eyes of Lionel, who paused a moment, with inward vexation, before he added—

"Let who will be her relatives, she is this night to become my wife. You will remain and witness the ceremony, and then you will extinguish the lights, and return the key of the church to Dr. Liturgy. In the morning come to me for your reward."

The changeling arose, with an air of singular importance, and answered—

"To be sure. Major Lincoln is to be married, and he asks Job to the wedding! Now Nab may preach her

sarmons about pride and flaunty feelings as much as she will ; but blood is blood, and flesh is flesh, for all her sayings ! ”

Struck by the expression of wild meaning that gleamed in the eyes of the simpleton, Major Lincoln demanded an explanation of his ambiguous language. But ere Job had leisure to reply, though his vacant look again denoted that his thoughts were already contracting themselves within their usually narrow limits, a sudden noise drew the attention of both to the entrance of the chapel. The door opened the next instant, and the figure of the divine, powdered with drifted snow, and encased in various defences against the cold, was seen, moving with a becoming gravity, through the principal aisle. Lionel hastened to receive him, and to conduct him to the seat he had just occupied himself.

When Dr. Liturgy had uncloaked, and appeared in his robes of office, the benevolence of his smile, and the whole expression of his countenance, denoted that he was satisfied with the condition in which he found the preparations.

“ There is no reason why a church should not be as comfortable as a man’s library, Major Lincoln,” he said, hitching his seat a little nearer to the stove. “ It is a puritanical and a dissenting idea, that religion has anything forbidding or gloomy in its nature ; and wherefore should we assemble amid pains and inconvenience to discharge its sacred offices.”

“ Quite true, sir,” returned Lionel, looking anxiously through one of the windows—“ I have not yet heard the hour of ten strike, though my watch tells me it is time ! ”

“ The weather renders the public clocks very irregular. There are so many unavoidable evils to which flesh is heir, that we should endeavor to be happy on all occasions—indeed it is a duty——”

“ It’s not in the natur of sin to make fallen man happy,” said a low, growling voice from behind the stove.

“ Ha ! what ! did you speak, Major Lincoln—a very singular sentiment for a bridegroom ! ” muttered the divine.

“ ’Tis that weak young man, whom I have brought hither to assist me with the fires, repeating some of the lore of his mother ; nothing else, sir.”

By this time Dr. Liturgy had caught a glimpse of the crouching Job, and comprehending the interruption, he fell back in his chair, smiling superciliously, as he continued—

"I know the lad, sir ; I should know him. He is learned in the texts, and somewhat given to disputation in matters of religion. 'Tis a pity the little intellect he has had not been better managed in his infancy ; but they have helped to crush his feeble mind with their subtilties. We—I mean we of the established church—often style him the Boston Calvin—ha, ha, ha !—Old Cotton was not his equal in subtilty !—But speaking of the establishment, do you not fancy that one of the consequences of this rebellion will be to extend its benefits to the colonies, and that we may look forward to the period when the true Church shall possess its inheritance in these religious provinces ?"

"Oh, most certainly !" said Lionel, again walking anxiously to the window ; "would to God they had come !"

The divine, with whom weddings were matters of too frequent occurrence to awaken his sympathies, understood the impatient bridegroom literally, and replied, accordingly—

"I am glad to hear you say it, Major Lincoln, and I hope, when the act of amnesty shall be passed, to find your vote on the side of such a condition."

At this instant Lionel caught a glimpse of the well-known sleigh, moving slowly along the deserted street, and, uttering a cry of pleasure, he rushed to the door to receive his bride. Dr. Liturgy finished his sentence to himself, and, rising from his comfortable position, he took the light, and entered the chancel. The disposition of the candles having been previously made, when they were lighted, his book opened, his robes adjusted, and his features settled into a suitable degree of solemnity, he stood, waiting with becoming dignity the approach of those over whom he was to pronounce the nuptial benediction. Job placed himself within the shadows of the building, and stood regarding the attitude and imposing aspect of the priest, with a species of childish awe.

Then came a group, emerging from the obscurity of the distant part of the church, and moving slowly toward the altar. Cecil was in front, leaning on that arm which Lionel had given her, as much for support, as through courtesy. She had removed her outer and warmer garments in the vestibule of the sacred edifice, and now appeared, attired in a manner as well suited to the suddenness and privacy, as to the importance, of the ceremony. A mantle of satin, trimmed with delicate furs, fell carelessly from her shoulders, partly concealing by its folds the ex-

quisite proportions of her slender form. Beneath was a vestment of the same rich material, cut, after the fashions of that period, in a manner to give the exact outlines of the bust. Across the stomacher were deep rows of fine lace, and wide borders of the same valuable texture followed the retiring edges of her robe, leaving the costly dress within partly exposed to the eye. But the beauty and simplicity of her attire (it was simple for that day) was lost, or, rather, it served to adorn, unnoticed, the melancholy beauty of her countenance.

As they approached the expecting priest, Cecil threw, by a gentle movement, her mantle on the rails of the chancel, and accompanied Lionel, with a firmer tread than before, to the foot of the altar. Her cheeks were pale; but it was rather with a compelled resolution than dread, while her eyes were full of tenderness and thought. Of the two devotees of Hymen, she exhibited, if not the most composure, certainly the most singleness of purpose, and intentness on the duty before them; for while the looks of Lionel were stealing uneasily about the building, as if he expected some hidden object to start up out of the darkness, hers were riveted on the priest in sweet and earnest attention.

They paused in their allotted places; and after a moment was allowed for Agnes and Polwarth, who alone followed, to enter the chancel, the low but deep tones of the minister were heard in the solemn stillness of the place.

Dr. Liturgy had borrowed a suitable degree of inspiration from the dreariness of the hour, and the solitude of the building where he was required to discharge his sacred functions. As he delivered the opening exhortation of the service, he made long and frequent pauses between the members of the sentences, giving to each injunction a distinct and impressive emphasis. But when he came to those closing words—

"If any man can show just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else, hereafter, forever hold his peace."

He lifted his voice, and raised his eyes to the more distant parts of the chapel, as though he addressed a multitude in the gloom. The faces of all present involuntarily followed the direction of his gaze, and a moment of deep expectation, which can only be explained by the singularly wild character of the scene, succeeded the reverberation of his tones. At that moment, when each had taken

breath, and all were again turning to the altar, a huge shadow rose upon the gallery, and extended itself along the ceiling, until its gigantic proportions were seen hovering, like an evil spectre, nearly above them.

The clergyman suspended the half-uttered sentence. Cecil grasped the arm of Lionel convulsively, while a shudder passed through her frame that seemed about to shake it to dissolution.

The shadowy image then slowly withdrew, not without, however, throwing out a fantastic gesture, with an arm which stretched itself across the vaulted roof, and down the walls, as if about to clutch its victims beneath.

"If any man can show just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else, hereafter, forever hold his peace," repeated the priest aloud, as if he would summon the universe at the challenge.

Again the shadow rose, presenting this time the strong and huge lineaments of a human face, which it was not difficult, at such a moment, to fancy possessed even expression and life. Its strongly-marked features seemed to work with powerful emotion, and the lips moved as if the airy being was speaking to unearthly ears. Next came two arms, raised above the gazing group, with clasped hands, as in the act of benediction, after which the whole vanished, leaving the ceiling in its own dull white, and the building still as the graves which surrounded it.

Once more the excited minister uttered the summons; and again every eye was drawn, by a secret impulse, to a spot which seemed to possess the form, without the substance, of a human being. But the shadow was seen no more. After waiting several moments in vain, Dr. Liturgy proceeded, with a voice in which a growing tremor was very perceptible; but no further interruption was experienced to the end of the service.

Cecil pronounced her vows, and plighted her troth, in tones of holy emotion; while Lionel, who was prepared for some strange calamity, went through the service to the end, with a forced calmness. They were married; and when the blessing was uttered, not a sound nor a whisper was heard in the party. Silently they all turned away from the spot, and prepared to leave the place. Cecil stood passively, and permitted Lionel to wrap her form in the folds of her mantle with tender care; and when she would have smiled her thanks for the attention, she merely raised her anxious eyes to the ceiling, with an expression

that could not be mistaken. Even Polwarth was mute ; and Agnes forgot to offer those congratulations and good wishes, with which her heart had so recently been swelling.

The clergyman muttered a few words of caution to Job concerning the candles and the fire, and hurried after the retiring party with a quickness of step that he was willing to ascribe to the lateness of the hour, and with a total disregard to the safety of the edifice ; leaving the chapel to the possession of the ill-gifted, but undisturbed son of Abigail Pray.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all ;
Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close ;
And let us all to meditation.”—*King Henry VI.*

THE bridal party entered their little vehicle silent and thoughtful ; the voice of Polwarth being alone audible, as he gave a few low and hurried orders to the groom who was in waiting. Dr. Liturgy approached for a moment, and made his compliments, when the sleigh darted away from the door of the building, as swiftly as if the horse that drew it partook of the secret uneasiness of those it held. The movements of the divine, though less rapid, were equally diligent, and in less than a minute the winds whistled, and clouds of snow were driven through a street, which everything possessing life appeared once more to have abandoned.

The instant Polwarth had discharged his load at the door of Mrs. Lechmere, he muttered something of “happiness and to-morrow,” which his friend did not understand, and dashed through the gate of the court-yard, at the same mad rate that he had driven from the church. On entering the house, Agnes repaired to the room of her aunt, to report that the marriage knot was tied, while Lionel led his silent bride into the empty parlor.

Cecil stood, fixed and motionless as a statue, while her husband removed her cloak and mantle ; her cheeks pale, her eyes riveted on the floor, and her whole attitude and manner exhibiting the intensity of thought, which had been created by the scene in which she had just been an actor. When he had relieved her light form from the load of garments in which it had been enveloped by his care,

he impelled her gently to a seat by his side, on the settee, and, for the first time since she had uttered the final vow at the altar, she spoke—

“Was it a fearful omen?” she whispered, as he folded her to his heart, “or was it no more than a horrid fancy?”

“’Twas nothing, love—’twas a shadow—that of Job Pray, who was with me to light the fires.”

“No—no—no,” said Cecil, speaking with the rapidity of high excitement, and in tones that gathered strength as she proceeded—“Those were never the unmeaning features of the miserable simpleton! Know you, Lincoln, that in the haughty, the terrific outlines of those dreadful lineaments on the wall, I fancied a resemblance to the profile of our great uncle, your father’s predecessor in the title—Dark Sir Lionel, as he was called.”

“It was easy to fancy anything, at such a time, and under such circumstances. Do not cloud the happiness of our bridal by these gloomy fancies.”

“Am I gloomy or superstitious by habit, Lionel?” she asked, with a deprecating tenderness in her voice, that touched his inmost heart—“But it came at such a moment, and in such a shape, that I should be more than woman not to tremble at its terrible import!”

“What is it you dread, Cecil? Are we not married; lawfully, solemnly united?”—The bride shuddered; but perceiving her unwilling, or unable to answer, he continued—“beyond the power of man to sever; and with the consent, nay, by the earnest wish, the command, of the only being who can have a right to express a wish, or have an opinion on the subject?”

“I believe—that is, I think, it is all as you say, Lionel,” returned Cecil, still looking about her with a vacant and distressed air, that curdled his blood; “yes—yes, we are certainly married; and oh! how ardently do I implore Him who sees and governs all things, that our union may be blessed! but——”

“But what, Cecil? will you let a thing of naught—a shadow—affect you in this manner?”

“’Twas a shadow, as you say, Lincoln; but where was the substance?”

“Cecil, my sensible, my good, my pious Cecil, why do your faculties slumber in this unaccountable apathy? Ask your own excellent reason: can there be a shade where nothing obstructs the light?”

“I know not. I cannot reason—I have not reason. All

things are possible to Him, whose will is law, and whose slightest wish shakes the universe. There was a shadow—a dark, a speaking, and a terrible shadow; but who can say, where was the reality?"

"I had almost answered, with the phantom, only in your own sensitive imagination, love. But arouse your slumbering powers, Cecil, and reflect how possible it was for some curious idler of the garrison to have watched my movements, and to have secreted himself in the chapel; perhaps from wanton mischief—perhaps without motive of any kind."

"He then chose an awful moment in which to act his gambols!"

"It may have been one whose knowledge was just equal to giving a theatrical effect to his silly deception. But are we to be cheated of our happiness by such weak devices; or to be miserable because Boston contains a fool?"

"I may be weak, and silly, and even impious in this terror, Lincoln," she said, turning her softened looks upon his anxious face, and attempting to smile; "but it is assailing a woman in a point where she is most sensitive.—You know that I have no reserve with you, now. Marriage with us is the tie that 'that binds all charities in one,' and at the moment when the heart is full of its own security, is it not dreadful to have such mysterious presages, be they true, or be they false, answering to the awful appeal of the church!"

"Nor is the tie less binding, less important, or less dear, my own Cecil, to us. Believe me, whatever the pride of manhood may say of high destinies, and glorious deeds, the same affections are deeply seated in our nature, and must be soothed by those we love, and not by those who contribute to our vanity. Why then permit this chill to blight your best affections in their budding?"

There was so much that was soothing to the anxiety of a bride, in his sentiments, and so much of tender interest in his manner, that he at length succeeded, in a great degree, in luring Cecil from her feverish apprehensions. As he spoke, a mantling bloom diffused itself over her cold and pallid cheeks, and when he had done, her eyes lighted with the glow of a woman's confidence, and were turned on his own in bright, but blushing pleasure. She repeated his word "chill," with an emphasis and a smile that could not be misconstrued, and in a few minutes he entirely succeeded in quelling the uneasy presentiments that had

gained a momentary ascendancy over her clear and excellent faculties.

But notwithstanding Major Lincoln reasoned so well, and with so much success, against the infirmity of his bride, he was by no means equal to maintain as just an argument with himself. The morbid sensibility of his mind had been awakened in a most alarming manner by the occurrences of the evening, though his warm interest in the happiness of Cecil had enabled him to smother them, so long as he witnessed the extent and nature of her apprehensions. But, exactly in the proportion as he persuaded her into forgetfulness of the past, his recollections became more vivid and keen; and notwithstanding his art, he might not have been able to conceal the workings of his troubled thoughts from his companion, had not Agnes appeared, and announced the desire of Mrs. Lechmere to receive the bride and bridegroom in her sick chamber.

"Come, Lincoln," said his lovely companion, rising at the summons, "we have been selfish in forgetting how strongly my grandmother sympathizes in our good or evil fortunes. We should have discharged this duty without waiting to be reminded of it."

Without making any other reply than a fond pressure of the hand he held, Lionel drew her arm through his own, and followed Agnes into the little hall which conducted to the upper part of the dwelling.

"You know the way, Major Lincoln," said Miss Danforth; "and should you not, my lady bride can show you. I must go and cast a worldly eye on the little banquet I have ordered, but which I fear will be labor thrown away, since Captain Polwarth has disdained to exhibit his prowess at the board. Truly, Major Lincoln, I marvel that a man of so much substance as your friend, should be frightened from his stomach by a shadow!"

Cecil even laughed, and in those sweet feminine tones that are infectious, at the humor of her cousin; but the dark and anxious expression that gathered round the brow of her husband as suddenly checked her mirth.

"Let us ascend, Lincoln," she said, instantly, "and leave mad Agnes to her household cares, and her folly."

"Ay, go," cried the other, turning away toward the supper-room—"eating and drinking is not ethereal enough for your elevated happiness; would I had a repast worthy of such sentimental enjoyment! Let me see—dew drops and lovers' tears, in equal quantities, sweetened by Cupid's

smiles, with a dish of sighs, drawn by moonlight, for piquancy, as Polwarth would say, would flavor a bowl to their tastes. The dew drops might be difficult to procure, at this inclement season, and in such a night; but if sighs and tears would serve alone, poor Boston is just now rich enough in materials!"

Lionel, and his half-blushing, half-smiling companion, heard the dying sounds of her voice, as she entered the distant apartment, expressing, by its tones, the mingled pleasantries and spleen of its mistress, and in the next instant they forgot both Agnes and her humor, as they found themselves in the presence of Mrs. Lechmere.

The first glance of his eye at their expecting relative, brought a painful throb to the heart of Major Lincoln. Mrs. Lechmere had caused herself to be raised in her bed, in which she was seated nearly upright, supported by pillows. Her wrinkled and emaciated cheeks were flushed with an unnatural color, that contrasted too violently with the marks which age and strong passions had impressed, with their indelible fingers, on the surrounding wreck of those haughty features, which had once been distinguished for great, if not attractive beauty. Her hard eyes had lost their ordinary expression of worldly care, in a brightness which caused them rather to glare, than beam, with flashes of unbridled satisfaction that could no longer be repressed. In short, her whole appearance brought a startling conviction to the mind of the young man, that whatever might have been the ardor of his own feelings in espousing her grand-child, he had at length realized the fondest desires of a being so worldly, so designing, and, as he was now made keenly to remember, of one also, who, he had much reason to apprehend, was so guilty. The invalid did not seem to think a concealment of her exultation any longer necessary; for, stretching out her arms, she called to her child, in a voice raised above its natural tones, and which was dissonant and harsh from a sort of unholy triumph—

"Come to my arms, my pride, my hope, my dutiful, my deserving daughter! Come and receive a parent's blessing; that blessing which you so much deserve!"

Even Cecil, warm and consoling as was the language of her grandmother, hesitated an instant at the unnatural voice in which the summons was uttered, and advanced to meet her embrace with a manner less warm than was usual to her own ardent and unsuspecting nature. This secret restraint existed, however, but for a moment; for when

she felt the encircling arms of Mrs. Lechmere pressing her warmly to her aged bosom, she looked up into the face of her grandmother, as if to thank her for so much affection, by her own guileless smiles and tears.

"Here, then, Major Lincoln, you possess my greatest, I had almost said my only treasure!" added Mrs. Lechmere—"she is a good, a gentle, and dutiful child; and heaven will bless her for it, as I do." Leaning forward, she continued in a less excited voice—"Kiss me, my Cecil, my bride, my Lady Lincoln! for by that loved title I may now call you, as yours, in the course of nature, it soon will be."

Cecil, greatly shocked at the unguarded exultation of her grandmother, gently withdrew herself from her arms, and with eyes bent to the floor in shame, and burning cheeks, she willingly moved aside to allow Lionel to approach, and receive his share of the congratulations. He stooped to bestow the cold and reluctant kiss, which the offered cheek of Mrs. Lechmere invited, and muttered a few incoherent words concerning his present happiness, and the obligation she had conferred. Notwithstanding the high and disgusting triumph which had broken through the usually cold and cautious manner of the invalid, a powerful and unbidden touch of nature mingled in her address to the bridegroom. The fiery and unnatural glow of her eyes even softened with a tear, as she spoke—

"Lionel, my nephew, my son," she said—"I have endeavored to receive you in a manner worthy of the head of an ancient and honorable name; but were you a sovereign prince, I have now done my last and best in your favor. Cherish her—love her—be more than husband—be all of kin to the precious child, for she merits all! Now is my latest wish fulfilled!—Now may I prepare myself for the last great change, in the quiet of a long and tranquil evening to the weary and troublesome day of life!"

"Woman!" said a tremulous voice in the background—"thou deceivest thyself!"

"Who," exclaimed Mrs. Lechmere, raising her body with a convulsive start, as if about to leap from the bed—"who is it speaks?"

"'Tis I," returned the well-remembered tones of Ralph, as he advanced from the door to the foot of her couch—"tis I, Priscilla Lechmere; one who knows thy merits and thy doom!"

The appalled woman fell back on her pillows, gasping

for breath, the flush of her cheeks giving place to their former signs of age and disease, and her eye losing its high exultation in the glazed look of sudden terror. It would seem, however, that a single moment of reflection was sufficient to restore her spirit, and with it all her deep resentments. She motioned the intruder away, by a violent gesture of the hand, and after an effort to command her utterance, she said, in a voice rendered doubly strong by overwhelming passion—

“Why am I braved, at such a moment, in the privacy of my sick chamber? Have that madman, or impostor, whichever he may be, removed from my presence!”

She uttered her request to deadened ears. Lionel neither moved nor answered. His whole attention was given to Ralph, across whose hollow features a smile of calm indifference passed, which denoted how little he regarded the threatened violence. Even Cecil, who clung to the arm of Lionel, with all a woman’s dependence on him she loved, was unnoticed by the latter, in the absorbing interest he took in the sudden re-appearance of one whose singular and mysterious character had long since raised such hopes and fears in his own bosom.

“Your doors will shortly be opened to all who may choose to visit here,” the old man coldly answered; “why should I be driven from a dwelling where heartless crowds shall so soon enter and depart at will! Am I not old enough; or do I not bear enough of the aspect of the grave, to become your companion? Priscilla Lechmere, you have lived till the bloom of your cheeks has given place to the color of the dead; your dimples have become furrowed and wrinkled lines; and the beams of your once bright eye have altered to the dull look of care—but you have not yet lived for repentance.”

“What manner of language is this?” cried his wondering listener, inwardly shrinking before his steady, but glowing look. “Why am I singled from the world for this persecution?—are my sins past bearing; or am I alone to be reminded that sooner or later age and death will come?—I have long known the infirmities of life, and may truly say, that I am prepared for their final consequences.”

“’Tis well,” returned the unmoved and apparently immovable intruder—“take, then, and read the solemn decree of thy God; and may He grant thee firmness to justify so much confidence.”

As he spoke, he extended, in his withered hand, an open

letter toward Mrs. Lechmere, which the quick glance of Lionel told him bore his own name in the superscription. Notwithstanding the gross invasion of his rights, the young man was passive under the detection of this second and gross interference of the other in his most secret matters, watching with eager interest the effect the strange communication would produce on his aunt.

Mrs. Lechmere took the letter from the stranger with a sort of charmed submission, which denoted how completely his solemn manner had bent her to his will. The instant her look fell on the contents, it became fixed and wild. The note was, however, short, and the scrutiny was soon ended. Still she grasped it with an extended arm, though the vacant expression of her countenance betrayed that it was held before an insensible eye. A moment of silent and breathless wonder followed. It was succeeded by a shudder which passed through the whole frame of the invalid, her limbs shaking violently, until the rattling of the folds of the paper was audible in the most distant corner of the apartment.

"This bears my name," cried Lionel, shocked at her emotions, and taking the paper from her unresisting hand, "and should first have met my eye."

"Aloud—aloud, dear Lionel," said a faint but earnest whisper at his elbow; "aloud, I implore you, aloud!"

It was not, perhaps, so much in compliance with this affecting appeal, in which the whole soul of Cecil seemed wrapped, as by yielding to the overwhelming flow of that excitement to which he had been aroused, that Major Lincoln was led to conform to her request. In a voice rendered desperately calm by his emotions, he uttered the fatal contents of the note, in tones so distinct, that they sounded to his wife, in the stillness of the place, like the prophetic warnings of one from the dead.

"The state of the town has prevented that close attention to the case of Mrs. Lechmere, which her injuries rendered necessary. An inward mortification has taken place, and her present ease is only the forerunner of her death. I feel it my duty to say, that though she may live many hours, it is not improbable that she will die to-night."

To this short, but terrible annunciation, was placed the well-known signature of the attending physician. Here was a sudden change, indeed! All had thought that the disease had given way, when it seemed it had been preying insidiously on the vitals of the sick. Dropping the

note, Lionel exclaimed aloud, in the suddenness of his surprise—

“Die to-night! This is an unexpected summons, indeed!”

The miserable woman, after the first nerveless moment of her dismay, turned her looks anxiously from face to face, and listened intently to the words of the note, as they fell from the lips of Lionel, like one eager to detect the glimmerings of hope in the alarmed expression of their countenances. But the language of her physician was too plain, direct, and positive, to be misunderstood or perverted. Its very coldness gave it a terrific character of truth.

“Do you then credit it?” she asked in a voice whose husky tones betrayed but too plainly her abject unwillingness to be assured. “You! Lionel Lincoln, whom I had thought my friend.”

Lionel turned away silently from the sad spectacle of her misery; but Cecil dropped on her knees at the bed-side, and clasping her hands, she elevated them, looking like a beautiful picture of pious hope, as she murmured—

“He is no friend, dearest grandmother, who would lay flattery to a parting soul! But there is a better and a safer dependence than all this world can offer!”

“And you, too!” cried the devoted woman, rousing herself with a strength and energy that would seem to put the professional knowledge of her medical attendant at defiance—“do you also abandon me? you, whom I have watched in infancy, nursed in suffering, fondled in happiness, ay! and reared in virtue—yes, that I can say boldly in the face of the universe!—you, whom I have brought to this honorable marriage; would you repay me for all, by black ingratitude?”

“My grandmother! my grandmother! talk not thus cruelly to your child! But lean on the Rock of Ages for support, even as I have leaned on thee!”

“Away—away—weak, foolish child! Excess of happiness has maddened thee! Come hither, my son; let us speak of Ravenscliffe, the proud seat of our ancestors; and of those days we are yet to pass under its hospitable roofs. The silly girl thou hast wived would wish to frighten me!”

Lionel shuddered with inward horror while he listened to the forced and broken intonations of her voice, as she thus uttered the lingering wishes of her nature. He turned again from the view, and, for a moment, buried his face in

his hands, as if to exclude the world and its wickedness, together, from his sight.

"My grandmother, look not so wildly at us!" continued the gasping Cecil—"you may have yet hours, nay, days, before you." She paused an instant to follow the unsettled and hopeless gaze of an eye that gleamed despairingly on the objects of the room, and then, with a meek dependence on her own purity, dropping her face between her hands, she cried aloud in her agony—

"My mother's mother! would that I could die for thee!"

"Die!" echoed the same dissonant voice as before, from a throat that already began to rattle with the hastened approaches of death—"who would die amid the festivities of a bridal!—Away—leave me.—To thy closet, and thy knees, if thou wilt—but leave me."

She watched, with bitter resentment, the retiring form of Cecil, who obeyed with the charitable and pious intention of complying literally with her grandmother's order, before she added—

"The girl is not equal to the task I had set her! All of my race have been weak, but I—my daughter—my husband's niece——"

"What of that niece?" said the startling voice of Ralph, interrupting the diseased wanderings of her mind—"that wife of thy nephew—the mother of this youth? Speak, woman, while time and reason are granted thee."

Lionel now advanced to her bed-side, under an impulse that he could no longer subdue, and addressed her solemnly—

"If thou knowest aught of the dreadful calamity that has befallen my family," he said, "or in any manner hast been accessory to its cause, disburden thy soul, and die in peace. Sister of my grandfather! nay, more, mother of my wife! I conjure thee, speak—what of my injured mother?"

"Sister of thy grandfather—mother of thy wife," repeated Mrs. Lechmere, slowly, and in a manner that sufficiently indicated the unsettled state of her thoughts—"Yes, both are true!"

"Speak to me, then, of my mother, if you acknowledge the ties of blood—tell me of her dark fate!"

"She is in her grave—dead—rotten—yes—yes—her boasted beauty has been fed upon by beastly worms! What more would ye have, mad boy? Would'st wish to see her bones in their winding-sheet?"

"The truth!" cried Ralph; "declare the truth, and thy own wicked agency in the deed!"

"Who speaks?" repeated Mrs. Lechmere, dropping her voice from its notes of high excitement again, to the tremulous cadency of debility and age, and looking about her at the same time, as if a sudden remembrance had crossed her brain; "surely I heard sounds I should know!"

"Here; look on me—fix thy wandering eye, if it yet has power to see, on me," cried Ralph, aloud, as though he would command her attention at every hazard—" 'tis I that speak to thee, Priscilla Lechmere."

"What wouldst thou have? My daughter? She is in her grave! Her child? She is wedded to another.—Thou art too late! Thou art too late! Would to God thou hadst asked her of me in season——"

"The truth—the truth—the truth!" continued the old man, in a voice that rung through the apartment in wild and startling echoes—"the holy and undefiled truth! Give us that, and naught else."

This singular and solemn appeal awakened the latest energies of the despairing woman, whose inmost soul appeared to recoil before his cries. She made an effort to raise herself once more, and exclaimed—

"Who says that I am dying? I am but seventy! and 'tis only yesterday I was a child—a pure, an uncontaminated child! He lies—he lies! I have no mortification—I am strong, and have years to live and repent in."

In the pauses of her utterance, the voice of the old man was still heard shouting—

"The truth—the truth—the holy, undefiled truth!"

"Let me rise and look upon the sun," continued the dying woman. "Where are ye all? Cecil, Lionel—my children, do ye desert me now? Why do ye darken the room? Give me light—more light!—more light! for the sake of all in heaven and earth, abandon me not to this black and terrific darkness!"

Her aspect had become so hideously despairing, that the voice of even Ralph was stilled, and she continued uninterruptedly to shriek out the ravings of her soul.

"Why talk to such as I of death!—My time has been too short!—give me days—give me hours—give me moments! Cecil, Agnes—Abigail; where are ye?—help me, or I fall!"

She raised herself, by a desperate effort, from the pil-

lows, and clutched wildly at the empty air. Meeting the extended hand of Lionel, she caught it with a dying grasp, gave a ghastly smile, under the false security it imparted, and falling backward again, her mortal part settled, with a universal shudder, into a state of eternal rest.

As the horrid exclamations of the deceased ended, so deep a stillness succeeded in the apartment, that the passing gusts of the gale were heard sighing among the roofs of the town, and might easily be mistaken, at such a moment, for the moanings of unembodied spirits over so accursed an end.

SNC

12

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I wonder, sir, since wives are monstrous to you,
And that you fly them, as you swear them, lordship,
Yet, you desire to marry."—*All's Well That Ends Well.*

CECIL had left the room of her grandmother, with the consciousness of sustaining a load of anguish, to which her young experience had hitherto left her a stranger. On her knees, and in the privacy of her closet, she poured out the aspirations of her pure spirit, in fervent petitions to that power, which she, who most needed its support, had so long braved by the mockery of respect, and the seemliness of devotion. With her soul elevated by its recent communion with her God, and her feelings soothed even to calmness by the sacred glow that was shed around them, the youthful bride at length prepared to resume her post at the bedside of her aged relative.

In passing from her own room to that of Mrs. Lechmere, she heard the busy voice of Agnes below, together with the sounds of the preparations that were making to grace her own hasty bridal, and for a moment she paused to assure herself that all which had so recently passed, was more than the workings of a disturbed fancy. She gazed at the unusual, though modest ornaments of her attire; shuddered as she remembered the awful omen of the shadow; and then came to the dreadful reality with an overwhelming conviction of its truth. After laying her hand on the door, she paused, with secret terror, to catch the sounds that might issue from the chamber of the sick. After listening a moment, the bustle below was hushed, and she, too, heard the whistling of the wind, as its echoes

died away among the chimneys and angles of the building. Encouraged by the death-like stillness of those within her grandmother's room, Cecil now opened the door, under the pleasing impression that she should find the resignation of a Christian, where she had so lately witnessed the incipient ravings of despair. Her entrance was timid; for she dreaded to meet the hollow, but glaring eye of the nameless being who had borne the message of the physician, and of whose mien and language she retained a confused but fearful recollection. Her hesitation and her fears were, however, alike vain; for the room was silent and tenantless. Casting one wondering look around, in quest of the form most dear to her, Cecil advanced with a light step to the bed, and raising the coverlet, discovered the fatal truth at a glance.

The lineaments of Mrs. Lechmere had already stiffened, and assumed that cadaverous and ghastly expression, which marks the touch of death. The parting soul had left the impression of its agony on her features, exhibiting the wreck of those passions which caused her, even in death, to look backward on that world she was leaving forever, instead of forward to the unknown existence, toward which she was hurried. Perhaps the suddenness, and the very weight of the shock, sustained the cheerless bride in that moment of trial. She neither spoke nor moved for more than a minute; but remained with her eyes riveted on the desolation of that countenance she had revered from her infancy, with a species of holy awe that was not entirely free from horror. Then came the recollection of the portentous omens of her wedding, and with it a dread that the heaviest of her misfortunes were yet in reserve. She dropped the covering on the pallid features of the dead, and quitted the apartment with a hurried step. The room of Lionel was on the same floor with that which she had just left, and before she had time for reflection, her hand was on its lock. Her brain was bewildered with the rush of circumstances. For a single instant she paused with maiden bashfulness, even recoiling in sensitive shame from the act she was about to commit, when all her fears, mingled with glimmerings of the truth, flashed again across her mind, and she burst into the room, uttering the name of him she sought, aloud.

The brands of a fallen fire had been carefully raked together, and were burning with a feeble and wavering flame. The room seemed filled with a cold air, which, as

she encountered it, chilled the delicate person of Cecil ; and flickering shadows were playing on the walls, with the uncertain movements imparted by the unsteady light. But, like the apartment of the dead, the room was still and empty. Perceiving that the door of the little dressing-room was open, she rushed to its threshold, and the mystery of the cold air, and the wavering fire, was explained, when she felt the gusts of wind rush by her from the open door at the foot of the narrow stairs. If Cecil had ever been required to explain the feelings which induced her to descend, or the manner in which it was effected, she would have been unable to comply ; for, quick as thought, she stood on the threshold of the outer door, nearly unconscious of her situation.

The moon was still wading among the driving clouds, shedding just light enough to make the spectator sensible of the stillness of the camp and town. The easterly wind yet howled along the streets, occasionally lifting whirlwinds of snow, and wrapping whole squares in its dim wreaths. But neither man nor beast was visible amid the dreariness.

The bewildered bride shrunk from the dismal view, with a keen perception of its wild consonance with the death of her grandmother. In another moment she was again in the room above, each part of which was examined with maddening anxiety for the person of her husband. But her powers, excited and unnatural as they had become, could support her no longer. She was forced to yield to the impression that Lionel had deserted her in the most trying moment, and it was not strange that she coupled the sinister omens of the night with his mysterious absence. The heart-stricken girl clasped her hands in anguish, and shrieking the name of her cousin, sunk on the floor in total insensibility.

Agnes was busily and happily employed with her domestics, in preparing such a display of the wealth of the Lechmeres as should not disgrace her cousin in the eyes of her more wealthy lord and master. The piercing cry, however, notwithstanding the bustle of hurrying servants, and the clatter of knives and plates, penetrated to the supper-room, stilling each movement, and blanching every cheek.

"'Tis my name !" said Agnes ; " who is it calls ? "

" If it was *possible*," returned Meriton, with a suitable emphasis, " that Master Lionel's bride *could* scream so, I should say it was my lady's voice ! "

"'Tis Cecil—'tis Cecil!" cried Agnes, darting from the room; "O, I feared—I feared these hasty nuptials!"

There was a general rush of the menials into the chambers, when the fatal truth became immediately known to the whole family. The lifeless clay of Mrs. Lechmere was discovered in its ghastly deformity, and, to all but Agnes, it afforded a sufficient solution of the situation of the bride.

More than an hour passed before the utmost care of her attendants succeeded in restoring Cecil to a state in which questions might avail anything. Then her cousin took advantage of the temporary absence of her women, to mention the name of her husband. Cecil heard her with sudden joy; but looking about the room wildly, as if seeking him with her eyes, she pressed her hands upon her heart, and fell backward in that state of insensibility, from which she had just been roused. No part of this expressive evidence of her grief was lost on the other, who left the room the instant her care had succeeded in bringing the sufferer once more to her recollection.

Agnes Danforth had never regarded her aunt with that confiding veneration and love which purified the affections of the granddaughter of the deceased. She had always possessed her more immediate relatives, from whom she derived her feelings and opinions, nor was she wanting in sufficient discernment to distinguish the cold and selfish traits that had so particularly marked the character of Mrs. Lechmere. She had, therefore, consented to mortify her own spirit, and submit to the privations and dangers of the siege, entirely from a disinterested attachment to her cousin, who, without her presence, would have found her solitude and situation irksome.

In consequence of this disposition of her mind, Agnes was more shocked than distressed by the unexpected death that had occurred. Perhaps, if her anxiety had been less roused in behalf of Cecil, she might have retired to weep over the departure of one she had known so long, and of one, also, that, in the sincerity of her heart, she believed so little prepared for the mighty change. As it was, however, she took her way calmly to the parlor, where she summoned Meriton to her presence.

When the valet made his entrance, she assumed the appearance of a composure that was far from her feelings, and desired him to seek his master, with a request that he would give Miss Danforth a short interview, without de-

lay. During the time Meriton was absent on this errand, Agnes endeavored to collect her thoughts for any emergency.

Minute passed after minute, however, and the valet did not return. She arose, and stepping lightly to the door, listened, and thought she heard his footsteps moving about in the more distant parts of the building, with a quickness that proved he conducted the search in good faith. At length she heard them nigher, and it was soon certain he was on his return. Agnes seated herself, as before, and with an air that seemed as if she expected to receive the master instead of the man. Meriton, however, returned alone.

"Major Lincoln," she said, "you desired him to meet me here?"

The whole countenance of Meriton expressed his amazement, as he answered—

"Lord! Miss Agnus, Master Lionel has gone out! gone out on *such* a night! and what is more remarkable, he has gone out without his mourning; though the dead of his own blood and connections lies unburied in the house!"

Agnes preserved her composure, and gladly led the valet on in the path his thoughts had taken, in order to come at the truth, without betraying her own apprehensions.

"How know you, Mr. Meriton, that your master has been so far forgetful of appearances?"

"As certain, ma'am, as I know that he wore his parade uniform this evening when he left the house the first time; though little did I dream his honor was going to get married! If he hasn't gone out in the same dress, where is it?—Besides, ma'am, his last mourning is under lock, and here is the key in my pocket."

"'Tis singular he should choose such an hour, as well as the time of his marriage, to absent himself!"

Meriton had long learned to identify all his interests with those of his master, and he colored highly under the oblique imputation that he thought was no less cast on Lionel's gallantry, than on his sense of propriety in general.

"Why, Miss Agnus, you will please remember, ma'am," he answered, "as this wedding hasn't been at all like an English wedding—nor can I say that it is altogether usual to die in England as suddenly as Ma'am Lechmere has been pleased——"

"Perhaps," interrupted Agnes, "some accident may

have happened to him. Surely no man of common humanity would willingly be away at such a moment!"

The feelings of Meriton now took another direction, and he unhesitatingly adopted the worst apprehensions of the young lady.

Agnes leaned her forehead on her hand, for a minute, in deep reflection, before she spoke again, then, raising her eyes to the valet, she said—

"Mr. Meriton, know you where Captain Polwarth sleeps?"

"Certainly, ma'am!—He's a gentleman as always sleeps in his own bed, unless the king's service calls him elsewhere. A considerate gentleman is Captain Polwarth, ma'am, in respect of himself!"

Miss Danforth bit her lip, and her playful eye lighted for an instant, with a ray that banished its look of sadness; but in another moment her features became demure, if not melancholy, and she continued—

"I believe, then—'tis awkward and distressing, too, but nothing better can be done."

"Did you please to give me any orders, Miss Agnus?"

"Yes, Meriton; you will go to the lodgings of Captain Polwarth, and tell him Mrs. Lincoln desires his immediate presence here, in Tremont Street."

"My lady!" repeated the amazed valet—"why, Miss Agnus, the women says as my lady is unconscionable, and does not know what is doing, or who speaks to her! A mournful wedding, ma'am, for the heir of our house!"

"Then tell him," said Agnes, as she arose to leave the room, "that Miss Danforth would be glad to see him."

Meriton waited no longer than was necessary to mutter his approbation of this alteration in the message, when he left the house, with a pace that was a good deal quickened by his growing fears on the subject of his master's safety. Notwithstanding his apprehensions, the valet was by no means insensible to the severity of the climate he was in, nor to the peculiar qualities of that night, in which he was so unexpectedly thrust abroad to encounter its fury. He soon succeeded, however, in making his way to the quarters of Polwarth, in the midst of the driving snow, and in defiance of the cold that chilled his very bones. Happily for the patience of the worthy valet, Shearflint, the semi-military attendant of the captain, was yet up, having just discharged his nightly duties about the person of his master, who had not deemed it prudent to seek his pillow

without proving the consolations of the trencher. The door was opened at the first tap of Meriton, and when the other had expressed his surprise, by the usual exclamations, the two attendants adjourned to the sitting-room, where the embers of a good wood fire were yet shedding a grateful heat in the apartment.

"What a shocking country is this America for cold, Mr. Shearflint!" said Meriton, kicking the brands together with his boot, and rubbing his hands over the coals—"I doesn't think as our English cold is at all like it. It's a stronger and a better cold is ours, but it doesn't cut one like dull razors, as this here of America."

Shearflint, who fancied himself particularly liberal, and ever made it a point to show his magnanimity to his enemies, never speaking of the colonists without a sort of protecting air, that he intended should reflect largely on his own candor, briskly replied—

"This is a new country, Mr. Meriton, and one shouldn't be over-nice. When one goes abroad, one must learn to put up with difficulties; especially in the colonies, where it can't be expected all things should be as comfortable as we has 'em at 'ome."

"Well, now, I call myself a little particular in respect of weather," returned Meriton, "as and going. But give me England for climate, if for nothing else. The water comes down in that blessed country in good, honest drops, and not in little frozen bits, which prick one's face like so many fine needles!"

"You do look, Mr. Meriton, a little as if you had been shaking your master's powder-puff about your own ears. But I was just finishing the heel-tap of the captain's hot toddy; perhaps if you was to taste it, 'twould help to thaw out the idears."

"God bless me! Shearflint," said Meriton, relinquishing his grasp of the tankard, to take breath after a most vigorous draught—"do you always stuff his night-cap so thick?"

"No—no—the captain can tell a mixture by his nose, and it doesn't do to make partial alterations in his glass," returned Shearflint, giving the tankard a circular motion to stir its contents, while he spoke, and swallowing the trifle that remained, apparently at a gulp; "then as I thinks it a pity that anything should be wasted in these distressing times, I generally drinks what's left, after adding sum'at to the water, just to mellow it down. But what brings you abroad such a foul night, Mr. Meriton?"

"Sure enough, my idears wanted thawing, as you instigated, Shearflint! Here have I been sent on a message of life and death, and I was forgetting my errand like a raw boy just hired from the country!"

"Something is stirring, then!" said the other, offering a chair, which his companion received without any words, while Polwarth's man took another, with equal composure. "I thought as much, from the captain's hungry appearance, when he came home to-night, after dressing himself with so much care, to take his supper in Tremont Street."

"Something has been stirring indeed! For one thing, it is certain, Master Lionel was married to-night, in the King's Chapel!"

"Married!" echoed the other—"well, thank heaven, no such unavoidsables has befallen us, though we have been amputrated. I couldn't live with a married gentleman, no-how, Mr. Meriton. A master in breeches is enough for me, without one in petticoats to set him on!"

"That depends altogether on people's conditions, Shearflint," returned Meriton, with a sort of condescending air of condolence, as though he pitied the other's poverty.—"It would be great folly for a captain of foot, that is nothing *but* a captain of foot, to unite in Hymen. But, as we say at Ravenscliffe and Soho, Cupid will listen to the siyths of the heir of a Devonshire baronet, with fifteen thousand a year."

"I never heard any one say it was more than ten," interrupted the other, with a strong taint of ill-humor in his manner.

"Not more than ten! I can count ten myself, and I am sure there must be some that I doesn't know of."

"Well, if it be twenty," cried Shearflint, rising and kicking the brands among the ashes, in a manner to destroy all the cheerfulness of the litile fire that remained, "it won't help you to do your errand. You should remember that us servants of poor captains have nobody to help us with our work, and want our natural rest. What's your pleasure, Mr. Meriton?"

"To see your master, Mister Shearflint."

"That's impossibility! he's under five blankets, and I wouldn't lift the thinnest of them for a month's wages."

"Then I shall do it for you, because speak to him I must. Is he in this room?"

"Ay, you'll find him somewhere there, among the bed-clothes" returned Shearflint, throwing open the door of an

adjoining apartment, secretly hoping Meriton would get his head broken for his trouble, as he removed himself out of harm's way, by returning to the fire-place.

Meriton was compelled to give the captain several rough shakes before he succeeded in rousing him, in the least, from his deep slumbers. Then, indeed, he overheard the sleeper muttering—

“A damn'd foolish business, that—had we made proper use of our limbs, we might have kept them. You take this man to be your husband—better for worse—richer or poorer—ha! who are you rolling, dog? have you no regard to digestion, to shake a man in this manner, just after eating!”

“It's I, sir—Meriton.”

“And what the devil do you mean by this liberty, Mr. I, or Meriton, or whatever you call yourself?”

“I am sent for you in a great hurry, sir—awful things have happened to-night up in Tremont——”

“Happened!” repeated Polwarth, who by this time was thoroughly awake—“I know, fellow, that your master is married—I gave the bride away myself. I suppose nothing else, that is particularly extraordinary, has happened.”

“Oh! Lord, yes, sir—my lady is in fainting fits, and Master Lionel has gone, God knows whither, and Madam Lechmere is dead!”

Meriton had not concluded, before Polwarth sprang from his bed in the best manner he was able, and began to dress himself, by a sort of instinct, though without any definite object. By the unfortunate arrangement of Meriton's intelligence, he supposed the death of Mrs. Lechmere to be in consequence of some strange and mysterious separation of the bride from her husband, and his busy thoughts did not fail to recall the singular interruption of the nuptials, so often mentioned.

“And Miss Danforth!” he asked—“how does she bear it?”

“Like a woman, as she is, and a true lady. It is no small thing as puts Miss Agnus beside herself, sir!”

“No, that it is not! she is much more apt to drive others mad.”

“'Twas she, sir, as sent me to desire you to come up to Tremont Street, without any delay.”

“The devil it was! Hand me that boot, my good fellow. One boot, thank God, is sooner put on than two!

The vest and stock next. You, Shearflint ! where have you got to, sirrah ! Bring me my leg, this instant."

As soon as his own man heard this order, he made his appearance ; and as he was much more conversant with the mystery of his master's toilet than Meriton, the captain was soon equipped for his sudden expedition.

During the time he was dressing, he continued to put hasty questions to Meriton, concerning the cause of the disturbance in Tremont Street, the answers to which only served to throw him more upon the ocean of uncertainty than ever. The instant he was clad, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and, taking the arm of the valet, he essayed to find his way through the tempest to the spot where he was told Agnes Danforth awaited his appearance, with a chivalry that, in another age, and under different circumstances, would have made him a hero.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Proud lineage ! now how little thou appearest !"—BLAIR.

NOTWITHSTANDING the unusual alacrity with which Polwarth obeyed the unexpected summons of the capricious being whose favor he had so long courted, with so little apparent success, he lingered in his steps as he approached near enough to the house in Tremont Street, to witness the glancing lights which flitted before the windows. On the threshold he stopped, and listened to the opening and shutting of doors, and all those marked, and yet stifled sounds, which are wont to succeed a visit of the grim monarch to the dwellings of the sick. His rap was unanswered, and he was compelled to order Meriton to show him into the little parlor where he had so often been a guest, under more propitious circumstances. Here he found Agnes, awaiting his appearance with a gravity, if not sadness of demeanor, that instantly put to flight certain complimentary effusions, with which the captain had determined to open the interview, in order to follow up, in the true temper of a soldier, the small advantage he conceived he had obtained in the good opinion of his mistress. Altering the exulting expression of his features with his first glance at the countenance of Miss Danforth, Polwarth

paid his compliments in a manner better suited to the state of the family, and desired to know, if in any manner he could contribute to their comfort or relief.

"Death has been among us, Captain Polwarth," said Agnes, "and his visit has, indeed, been sudden and unexpected. To add to our embarrassment, Major Lincoln is missing!"

As she concluded, Agnes fastened her eyes on the face of the other, as though she would require an explanation of the unaccountable absence of the bridegroom.

"Lionel Lincoln is not a man to fly because death approaches," returned the captain, musing; "and less should I suspect him of deserting, in her distress, one like the lovely creature he has married. Perhaps he has gone in quest of medical aid?"

"It cannot be. I have gathered from the broken sentences of Cecil, that he, and some third person to me unknown, were last with my aunt, and must have been present at her death; for the face was covered. I found the bride in the room which Lionel has lately occupied—the doors open, and with indications that he and his unknown companion had left the house by the private stairs, which communicate with the western door. As my cousin speaks but little, all other clew to the movements of her husband is lost, unless this ornament, which I found glittering among the embers of the fire, may serve for such a purpose. It is, I believe, a soldier's gorget."

"It is, indeed; and it would seem the wearer has been in some jeopardy, by this bullet-hole through its centre. By heavens!—'tis that of M'Fuse!—Here is the 18th engraved; and I know these little marks which the poor fellow was accustomed to make on it at every battle; for he never failed to wear the bawble. The last was the saddest record of them all!"

"In what manner, then, could it be conveyed into the apartment of Major Lincoln? Is it possible that——"

"In what manner, truly!" interrupted Polwarth, rising in his agitation, and beginning to pace the room, in the best manner his mutilated condition would allow—"Poor Dennis! that I should find such a relic of thy end at last! You did not know Dennis, I believe. He was a man, fair Agnes, every way adapted by nature for a soldier. His was the form of Hercules! the heart of a lion, and the digestion of an ostrich! But he could not master this cruel lead! He is dead, poor fellow, he is dead!"

"Still you find no clew in the gorget by which to trace the living?" demanded Agnes.

"Ha!" exclaimed Polwarth, starting—"I think I begin to see into the mystery! The fellow who could slay the man with whom he had eaten and drunk, might easily rob the dead! You found the gorget near the fire of Major Lincoln's room, say you, fair Agnes?"

"In the embers, as if cast there for concealment, or dropped in some sudden strait."

"I have it—I have it!" returned Polwarth, striking his hands together, and speaking through his teeth—" 'twas that dog who murdered him, and justice shall now take its swing—fool or no fool, he shall be hung up like jerked beef, to dry in the winds of heaven!"

"Of whom speak you, Polwarth, with that threatening air?" inquired Agnes, in a soothing voice, of which, like the rest of her sex, she well knew not only the power, but when to exercise it.

"Of a canting, hypocritical miscreant, who is called Job Pray—a fellow with no more conscience than brains, nor any more brains than honesty. An ungainly villain, who will eat of your table to-day, and put the same knife that administered to his hunger to your throat to-morrow! It was such a dog that butchered the glory of Erin!"

"It must have been in open battle, then," said Agnes, "for though wanting in reason, Job has been reared in the knowledge of good and evil. The child must be strongly stamped with the wrath of God, indeed, for whom some effort is not made by a Boston mother, to recover his part in the great atonement!"

"He, then, is an exception; for surely no Christian will join you in the great natural pursuit of eating at one moment, and turn his fangs on a comrade at the next."

"But what has all this to do with the absent bridegroom?"

"It proves that Job Pray has been in his room since the fire was replenished, or some other than you would have found the gorget."

"It proves a singular association, truly, between Major Lincoln and the simpleton," said Agnes, musing; "but still it throws no light on his disappearance. 'Twas an old man that my cousin mentioned in her unconnected sentences!"

"My life on it, fair Agnes, that if Major Lincoln has left the house mysteriously to-night, it is under the guidance

of that wretch!—I have known them together in council more than once, before this.”

“Then, if he be weak enough to forsake such a woman as my cousin, at the instigation of a fool, he is unworthy of another thought!”

Agnes colored as she spoke, and turned the conversation with a manner that denoted how deeply she resented the slight to Cecil.

The peculiar situation of the town, and the absence of all her own male relatives, soon induced Miss Danforth to listen to the reiterated offers of service from the captain, and finally to accept them. Their conference was long and confidential; nor did Polwarth retire until his footsteps were assisted by the dull light of the approaching day. When he left the house to return to his own quarters, no tidings had been heard of Lionel, whose intentional absence was now so certain, that the captain proceeded to give his orders for the funeral of the deceased, without any further delay. He had canvassed with Agnes the propriety of every arrangement so fully, that he was at no loss how to conduct himself. It had been determined between them that the state of the siege, as well as certain indications of movements which were already making in the garrison, rendered it inexpedient to delay the obsequies a moment longer than was required by the unavoidable preparations.

Accordingly, the Lechmere vault, in the church-yard of the “King’s Chapel,” was directed to be opened, and the vain trappings, in which the dead are usually enshrouded, were provided. The same clergyman, who had so lately pronounced the nuptial benediction over the child, was now required to perform the last melancholy offices of the Church over the parent, and the invitations to the few friends of the family who remained in the place were duly issued in suitable form.

By the time the sun had fallen near the amphitheatre of hills, along whose crests were, here and there, to be seen the works of the indefatigable men who held the place in leaguer, the brief preparations for the interment of the deceased were completed. The prophetic words of Ralph were now fulfilled, and, according to the custom of the province, the doors of one of its proudest dwellings were thrown open for all those who chose to enter and depart at will. The funeral train, though respectable, was far from extending to that display of solemn countenances

which Boston, in its peace and pride, would not have failed to exhibit on any similar occasion. A few of the oldest and most respected of the inhabitants, who were distantly connected by blood or alliances with the deceased, attended; but there had been nothing in the cold and selfish character of Mrs. Lechmere to gather the poor and dependent in sorrowing groups around her funeral rites. The passage of the body, from its late dwelling to the tomb, was quiet, decent, and impressive, but entirely without any demonstrations of grief. Cecil had buried herself and her sorrows, together, in the privacy of her own room, and none of the more distant relatives who had collected, male or female, appeared to find it at all difficult to restrain their feelings within the bounds of the most rigid decorum.

Dr. Liturgy received the body, as usual, on the threshold of the sacred edifice, and the same solemn and affecting language was uttered over the dead, as if she had departed soothed by the most cheerful visions of an assured faith. As the service proceeded, the citizens clustered about the coffin, in deep attention, in admiration of the unwonted tremor and solemnity that had crept into the voice of the priest.

Among this little collection of the inhabitants of the colony, were interspersed a few men in the military dress, who, having known the family of the deceased in more settled times, had not forgotten to pay the last tribute to the memory of one of its dead.

When the short service was ended, the body was raised on the shoulders of the attendants, and borne into the yard, to its place of final rest. At such a funeral, where few mourned, and none wept, no unnecessary delay would be made in disposing of the melancholy relics of mortality. In a very few moments, the narrow tenement, which contained the festering remains of one who had so lately harbored such floods of human passion, was lowered from the light of day, and the body was left to moulder by the side of those, which had gone before to the darkness of the tomb. Perhaps, of all who witnessed the descent of the coffin, Polwarth alone, through that chain of sympathies which bound him to the caprice of Agnes, felt any emotion at all in consonance with the solemn scene. The obsequies of the dead were, like the living character of the woman, cold, formal, and artificial. The sexton and his assistants had hardly commenced replacing the stone which covered

the entrance of the vault, when a knot of elderly men set the example of desertion, by moving away in a body from the spot. As they picked their footsteps among the graves, and over the frozen ground of the church-yard, they discoursed idly together, of the fortunes and age of the woman of whom they had now taken their leave forever. The curse of selfishness appeared even to have fallen on the warning, which so sudden an end should have given to those who forgot they tottered on the brink of the grave. They spoke of the deceased as of one who had failed to awaken the charities of our nature, and though several ventured their conjectures as to the manner in which she had disposed of her worldly possessions, not one remembered to lament that she had continued no longer to enjoy them. From this theme they soon wandered to themselves, and the whole party quitted the church-yard, joking each other on the inroads of time, each man attempting to ape the elastic tread of youth, in order not only to conceal from his companions the ravages of age, but with a vain desire to extend the artifice so far, if possible, as to deceive himself.

When the seniors of the party withdrew, the remainder of the spectators did not hesitate to follow; and in a few minutes Polwarth found himself standing before the vault, with only two others of all those who had attended the body. The captain, who had been at no little expense of time and trouble to maintain the decencies which became a near friend of the family of the deceased, stood a minute longer, to permit these lingering followers to retire also, before he turned his own back on the place of the dead. But perceiving they both maintained their posts, in silent attention, he raised his eyes, more curiously, to examine who these loiterers might be.

The one nearest to himself was a man whose dress and air bespoke him to be of no very exalted rank in life, while the other was a woman of even an inferior condition, if an opinion might be formed from the squalid misery that was exhibited in her attire. A little fatigued with the arduous labors of the day, and of the duties of the unusual office he had assumed, the worthy captain touched his hat with studied decorum, and said—

“I thank you, good people, for this mark of respect to the memory of my deceased friend; but as we have performed all that can now be done in her behalf, we will retire.”

Apparently encouraged by the easy and courteous manner of Polwarth, the man approached still nigher, and, after bowing with much respect, ventured to say—

“They tell me ’tis the funeral of Madam Lechmere that I have witnessed?”

“They tell you true, sir,” returned the captain, beginning slowly to pick his way toward the gate; “of Mrs. Priscilla, the relict of Mr. John Lechmere—a lady of a creditable descent, and I think it will not be denied that she has had honorable interment.”

“If it be the lady I suppose,” continued the stranger, “she is of an honorable descent indeed. Her maiden name was Lincoln, and she is aunt to the great Devonshire baronet of that family.”

“How! know you the Lincolns?” exclaimed Polwarth, stopping short, and turning to examine the other with a stricter eye. Perceiving, however, that the stranger was a man of harsh and peculiarly forbidding features, in the vulgar dress already mentioned, he muttered—“you may have heard of them, friend, but I should doubt whether your intimacy could amount to such wholesome familiarities as eating and drinking.”

“Stronger intimacies than that, sir, are sometimes brought about between men who were born to very different fortunes,” returned the stranger, with a peculiarly sarcastic and ambiguous smile, which meant more than met the eye—“but all who know the Lincolns, sir, will allow their claims to distinction. If this lady was one of them, she had reason to be proud of her blood.”

“Ay, you are not tainted, I see, with these revolutionary notions, my friend,” returned Polwarth; “she was also connected with a very good sort of a family in this colony, called the Danforths—you know the Danforths?”

“Not at all, sir, I——”

“Not know the Danforths!” exclaimed Polwarth, once more stopping to bestow a freer scrutiny on his companion. After a short pause, however, he nodded his head, in approbation of his own conclusions, and added—“No, no—I am wrong—I see you could not have known much of the Danforths!”

The stranger appeared quite willing to overlook the cavalier treatment he received, for he continued to attend the difficult footsteps of the maimed soldier, with the same respectful deference as before.

"I have no knowledge of the Danforths, it is true," he answered; "but I may boast of some intimacy with the family of Lincoln."

"Would to God, then," cried Polwarth, in a sort of soliloquy, which escaped him in the fulness of his heart, "you could tell us what has become of its heir!"

The stranger stopped short in his turn, and exclaimed—

"Is he not serving with the army of the king, against this rebellion?—Is he not here?"

"He is here, or he is there, or he is anywhere; I tell you he is lost."

"He is lost!" echoed the other.

"Lost!" repeated an humble female voice, at the very elbow of the captain.

This singular repetition of his own language aroused Polwarth from the abstraction into which he had suffered himself to fall. In his course from the vault to the church-yard gate, he had unconsciously approached the woman before mentioned, and when he turned at the sound of her voice, his eyes fell full upon her anxious countenance. The very first glance was enough to tell the observant captain that, in the midst of her poverty and rags, he saw the broken remains of great female beauty. Her dark and intelligent eyes, set as they were in a sallow and sunken countenance, still retained much of the brightness, if not of the softness and peace of youth. The contour of her face was also striking, though she might be said to resemble one whose loveliness had long since departed with her innocence. But the gallantry of Polwarth was proof even against the unequivocal signs of misery, if not of guilt, which were so easily to be traced in her appearance; and he too much respected even the remnants of female charms which were yet visible amid such a mass of unseemliness, to regard them with an unfriendly eye. Apparently encouraged by the kind look of the captain, the woman ventured to add—

"Did I hear aright, sir?—said you that Major Lincoln was lost?"

"I am afraid, good woman,"—returned the captain, leaning on the iron-shod stick with which he was wont to protect his footsteps along the icy streets of Boston—"that this siege has, in your case, proved unusually severe. If I am not mistaken in a matter in which I profess to know much, nature is not supported as nature should be. You would ask for food, and God forbid that I should deny a

fellow-creature a morsel of that which constitutes both the seed and the fruits of life. Here is money."

The muscles of the attenuated countenance of the woman worked with a sudden convulsive motion, and, for a moment, she glanced her eyes wistfully toward his silver, but a slight flush passing quickly over her pallid features, she answered—

"Whatever may be my wants and my suffering, I thank my God that he has not levelled me with the beggar of the streets. Before that evil day shall come, may I find a place among these frozen hillocks where we stand. But I beg pardon, sir; I thought I heard you speak of Major Lincoln."

"I did—and what of him? I said he was lost; and it is true, if that be lost which cannot be found."

"And did Madam Lechmere take her leave before he was missing?" asked the woman advancing a step nearer to Polwarth, in her intense anxiety to be answered.

"Do you think, good woman, that a gentleman of Major Lincoln's notion of things, would disappear after the decease of his relative, and leave a comparative stranger to fill the office of principal mourner."

"The Lord forgive us all our sins and wickedness!" muttered the woman, drawing the shreds of her tattered cloak about her shivering form, and hastening silently away into the depths of the grave-yard. Polwarth regarded her unceremonious departure for a moment, in surprise, and then, turning to his remaining companion, he remarked—

"That woman is unsettled in her reason, for the want of wholesome nutriment. It is just as impossible to retain the powers of the mind, and neglect the stomach, as it is to expect a truant boy will make a learned man." By this time the worthy captain had forgotten whom it was he addressed, and he continued, in his usual philosophic strain, "Children are sent to school to learn all useful inventions but that of eating; for to eat—that is, to eat with judgment,—is as much of an invention as any other discovery. Every mouthful a man swallows has to undergo four important operations, each of which may be called a crisis in the human constitution."

"Suffer me to help you over this grave," said the other, officiously offering his assistance.

"I thank you, sir, I thank you—'tis a sad commentary on my words!" returned the captain with a melancholy

smile. "The time has been when I served in the light corps, but your men in unequal quantities are good for little else but garrisons!—As I was saying, there is first, the selection ; second, mastication ; third, deglutition ; and lastly, the digestion."

"Quite true, sir," said the stranger, a little abruptly ; "thin diet and light meals are best for the brain."

"Thin diet and light meals, sir, are good for nothing but to rear dwarfs and idiots !" returned the captain with some heat. "I repeat to you, sir——"

He was interrupted by the stranger, who suddenly smothered a dissertation on the connection between the material and immaterial, by asking—

"If the heir of such a family be lost, is there none to see that he is found again ?"

Polwarth, finding himself thus checked in the very opening of his theme, stopped again, and stared the other full in the face for a moment, without making any reply. His kind feeling, however, got the better of his displeasure, and yielding to the interest he felt in the fate of Lionel, he answered—

"I would go all lengths, and incur every hazard to do him service !"

"Then, sir, accident has brought those together who are willing to engage in the same undertaking ! I, too, will do my utmost to discover him ! I have heard he has friends in this province. Has he no connection to whom we may apply for intelligence ?"

"None nearer than a wife."

"A wife !" repeated the other in surprise—"is he then married ?"

A long pause ensued, during which the stranger mused deeply, and Polwarth bestowed a still more searching scrutiny than ever on his companion. It would appear that the result was not satisfactory to the captain ; for, shaking his head, in no very equivocal manner, he resumed the task of picking his way among the graves, toward the gate, with renewed diligence. He was in the act of seating himself in the punga, when the stranger again stood at his elbow, and said—

"If I knew where to find his wife, I would offer my services to the lady."

Polwarth pointed to the building of which Cecil was now the mistress, and answered, somewhat superciliously as he drove away—

"She is there, my good friend, but your application will be useless!"

The stranger received the direction in an understanding manner, and smiled with satisfied confidence, while he took the opposite route from that by which the busy equipage of the captain had already disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Up Fish street! down Saint Magnus' corner!
Kill and knock down! Throw them into the Thames!—
What noise is this I hear? Dare any be so bold to sound
Retreat or parley, when I command them kill?"

—*King Henry IV.*

It was rarely, indeed, that the equal-minded Polwarth undertook an adventure with so fell an intent as was the disposition with which he directed the head of the hunter to be turned toward the Dock square. He had long known the residence of Job Pray, and often, in passing from his lodgings, near the common, into the more fashionable quarter of the town, the good-natured epicure had turned his head to bestow a nod and a smile on the unsophisticated admirer of his skill in the culinary art. But now, as the pung whirled out of Corn hill into the well-known area, his eye fell on the low and gloomy walls of the warehouse, with a far less amicable design.

From the time he was apprised of the disappearance of his friend, the captain had been industriously ruminating on the subject, in a vain wish to discover any probable reason that might induce a bridegroom to adopt so hasty, and, apparently, so unjustifiable a step, as the desertion of his bride, and that, too, under circumstances of such peculiar distress. But the more he reasoned, the more he found himself involved in the labyrinth of perplexity, until he was glad to seize on the slightest clew which offered, to lead him from his obscurity. It has already been seen in what manner he received the intelligence conveyed through the gorget of M'Fuse, and it now remains for us to show with what commendable ingenuity he improved the hint.

It had always been a matter of surprise to Polwarth, that a man like Lionel should tolerate so much of the society of the simpleton; nor had it escaped his observa-

tion, that the communications between the two were a little concealed under a shade of mystery. He had overheard the foolish boast of the lad, the preceding day, relative to the death of M'Fuse ; and the battered ornament, in conjunction with the place where it was found, which accorded so well with his grovelling habits, had tended to confirm its truth. The love of Polwarth for the grenadier was second only to his attachment for his earlier friend. The one had avowedly fallen, and he soon began to suspect that the other had been strangely inveigled from his duty by the agency of this ill-gifted changeling. To conceive an opinion, and to become confirmed in its justice, were results generally produced by the same operation of the mind, with this disciple of animal philosophy. While he stood near the tomb of the Lechmeres, in the important character of chief mourner, he had diligently revolved in his mind the brief arguments which he found necessary to this conclusion. The arrangement of his ideas might boast of the terseness of a syllogism. His proposition and inference were something as follows:—Job murdered M'Fuse ;—some great evil has occurred to Lionel ;—and therefore Job has been its author.

It is true, there was a good deal of intermediate argument to support this deduction, at which the captain cast an extremely cursory glance, but which the reader may easily conceive, if at all gifted in the way of imagination. It would require no undue belief of the connection between very natural effects and their causes, to show that Polwarth was not entirely unreasonable in suspecting the agency of the simpleton, nor in harboring the deep and bitter resentment that so much mischief, even though it were sustained from the hands of a fool, was likely to awaken. Be that as it may, by the time the pung had reached the point already mentioned, its rapid motion, which accelerated the ordinary quiet circulation of his blood, together with the scene through which he had just passed, and the recollections which had been crowding on his mind, conspired to wind up his resolution to a very obstinate pitch of determination. Of all his schemes, embracing, as they did, compulsion, confession, and punishment, Job Pray was, of course, destined to be both the subject and the victim.

The shadows of evening were already thrown upon the town, and the cold had long before driven the few dealers in meats and vegetables, who continued to find daily em-

ployment around the ill-furnished shambles, to their several homes. In their stead there was only to be seen a meagre and impoverished follower of the camp, stealing along the shadows of the building, with her half-famished child, as they searched among the offals of the market for some neglected morsel, to eke out the scanty meal of the night. But while the common mart presented this appearance of dulness and want, the lower part of the square exhibited a very different aspect.

The warehouse was surrounded by a body of men in uniform, whose disorderly and rapid movements proclaimed at once, to the experienced eye of the captain, that they were engaged in a scene of lawless violence. Some were rushing furiously into the building, armed with such weapons as the streets first offered to their hands, while others returned, filling the air with their threats and outcries. A constant current of eager soldiers was setting out of the dark passages in the neighborhood toward the place, and every window of the building was crowded with excited witnesses, who clung to the walls, apparently animating those within by their cheers and applause.

When Polwarth bade Shearflint pull the reins, he caught the quick, half-formed sentences that burst from the rioters, and even before he was able, in the duskiness of the evening, to discover the facings of their uniform, his ear detected the well-known dialect of the Royal Irish. The whole truth now broke upon him at once, and throwing his obese person from the sleigh, in the best manner he was able, he hobbled into the throng, with a singular compound of feeling, which owed its birth to the opposing impulses of a thirst for vengeance, and the lingering influence of his natural kindness. Better men than the captain have, however, lost sight of their humanity, under those fierce sympathies that are awakened in moments of tumult and violence. By the time he had forced his person into the large, dark apartment that formed the main building, he had, in a great degree, suffered himself to be worked into a sternness of purpose, which comported very ill with his intelligence and rank. He even listened, with unaccountable pleasure, to the threats and denunciations which filled the building; until he foresaw, from their savage nature, there was great danger that one half of his object, the discovery of Lionel, was likely to be frustrated by their fulfilment. Animated anew by this impression, he threw the rioters from him with prodigious energy, and succeeded

in gaining a position where he might become a more efficient actor in the fray.

There was still light enough to discover Job Pray placed in the centre of the warehouse, on his miserable bed, in an attitude between lying and sitting. While his bodily condition seemed to require the former position, his fears had induced him to attempt the latter. The large, red blotches which covered his unmeaning countenance, and his flushed eye-balls, too plainly announced that the unfortunate young man, in addition to having become the object of the wrath of a lawless mob, was a prey to the ravages of that foul disorder which had long before lighted on the town. Around this squalid subject of poverty and disease, a few of the hardiest of the rioters, chiefly the surviving grenadiers of the 18th, had gathered; while the less excited, or more timid among them, practised their means of annoyance at a greater distance from the malign atmosphere of the distemper. The bruised and bloody person of the simpleton manifested how much he had already suffered from the hands of his tormentors, who happily possessed no very fatal weapons, or the scene would have been much earlier terminated. Notwithstanding his great bodily debility, and the pressing dangers that beset him on every side, Job continued to face his assailants, with a sort of stupid endurance of the pains they inflicted.

At the sight of this revolting spectacle, the heart of Polwarth began greatly to relent, and he endeavored to make himself heard, in the clamor of fifty voices. But his presence was unheeded, for his remonstrances were uttered to ignorant men, wildly bent on vengeance.

"Pul the baist from his rags!" cried one—" 'tis no a human man, but a divil's imp, in the shape of a fellow cratur!"

"For such as *him* to murder the flower of the British army!" said another—"his small-pox is nothing but a foul invintion of the ould one, to save him from his daisarrevings!"

"Would any but a divil invent such a disorder at all?" interrupted a third, who, even in his anger, could not forget his humor. "Have a care, b'ys, he may give it to the whole family the naat'ral way, to save the charges of the inoculation!"

"Have done wid ye'r foolery, Terence," returned the first; "would ye trifle about death, and *his* unrevenged? Put a coal into his filth, b'ys, and burren *it* and him in the same bonfire!"

"A coal! a coal! a brand for the divil's burning!" echoed twenty soldiers, eagerly listening, in the madness of their fury, to the barbarous advice.

Polwarth again exerted himself, though unsuccessfully, to be heard; nor was it until a dozen voices proclaimed, in disappointment, that the house contained neither fire nor fuel, that the sudden commotion in the least subsided.

"Out of the way! out of the way wid ye!" roared one of gigantic mould, whose heavy nature had, like an overcharged volcano, been slowly wrought up to the eve of a fearful eruption—"Here is fire to destroy a salamander! Be he divil or be he saint, he has great need of his prayers!"

As he spoke, the fellow levelled a musket, and another instant would have decided the fate of Job, who cowered before the danger with instinctive dread, had not Polwarth beat up the piece with his cane, and interposed his body between them.

"Hold your fire, brave grenadier," he said, warily adopting a middle course between the language of authority and that of counsel. "This is hasty and unsoldier-like. I knew, and loved your late commander well; let us obtain the confessions of the lad before we proceed to punishment—there may be others more guilty than he."

The men regarded the unexpected intruder with such furious aspects as augured ill of their deference for his advice and station. "Blood for blood!" passed from mouth to mouth, in low, sullen mutterings; and the short pause which had succeeded his appearance was already broken by still less equivocal marks of hostility, when, happily for Polwarth, he was recognized, through the twilight, by a veteran of the grenadiers, as one of the former intimates of M'Fuse. The instant the soldier communicated this discovery to his fellows, the growing uproar again subsided, and the captain was relieved from no small bodily terror, by hearing his own name passing among them, coupled with such amicable additions as, "*his* ould fri'nd!"—"an offisher of the light troops!"—"he that the ribbils massacred of a leg!" &c. As soon as this explanation was generally understood, his ears were greeted with a burst from every mouth, of—

"Hurrah! for Captain Pollywarreth! *His* fri'nd! the brave Captain Pollywarreth!"

Pleased with his success, and secretly gratified by the commendations that were now freely lavished on himself,

with characteristic liberality, the mediator improved the slight advantage he had obtained, by again addressing them.

"I thank you for your good opinion, my friends," he added, "and must acknowledge it is entirely mutual. I love the Royal Irish, on account of one that I well knew, and greatly esteemed, and who, I fear, was murdered in defiance of all the rules of war."

"Hear ye that, Dennis murdered!"

"Blood for blood!" muttered three or four surly voices at once.

"Let us be deliberate, that we may be just, and just that our vengeance may be awful," Polwarth quickly answered, fearful that if the torrent once more broke loose, it would exceed his powers to stay it. "A true soldier always awaits his orders; and what regiment in the army can boast of its discipline, if it be not the 18th! Form yourselves in a circle around your prisoner, and listen, while I extract the truth from him. After that, should he prove guilty, I will consign him to your tenderest mercy."

The rioters, who only saw, in the delay, a more methodical execution of their own violent purpose, received the proposition with another shout, and the name of Polwarth, pronounced in all the varieties of their barbarous idioms, rung loudly through the naked rafters of the building, while they disposed themselves to comply.

The captain, with a wish to gain time to command his thoughts, required that a light should be struck, in order, as he said, to study the workings of the countenance of the accused. As the night had now gathered about them in good earnest, the demand was too reasonable for objection, and with the same headlong eagerness that they had manifested a few minutes before, to shed the blood of Job, they turned their attention, with thoughtless versatility, to effect this harmless object. A brand had been brought, for a very different end, when the plan of burning was proposed, and it had been cast aside again with the change of purpose. A few of its sparks were now collected, and some bundles of oakum, which lay in a corner of the warehouse, were fired, and carefully fed in such a manner as to shed a strong light through every cranny of the gloomy edifice.

By the aid of this fitful glare, the captain succeeded once more in marshalling the rioters in such a manner that no covert injury could be offered to Job. The whole affair

now assumed, in some measure, the character of a regular investigation. The curiosity of the men without overcame their fears of infection, and they crowded into the place, in earnest attention, until, in a very few moments, no other sound was audible but the difficult and oppressed respiration of their victim. When all the other noises had ceased, and Polwarth perceived by the eager and savage countenances, athwart which the bright glare of the burning hemp was gleaming, that delay might yet be dangerous, he proceeded at once in his inquiries.

"You may see, Job Pray, by the manner in which you are surrounded," he said, "that judgment has at length overtaken you, and that your only hope for mercy lies in your truth. Answer, then, to such questions as I shall put, and keep the fear of God before your eyes."

The captain paused to allow this exhortation to produce its desired effect. But Job, perceiving that his late tormentors were quiet, and to all appearance bent on no immediate mischief, sunk his head languidly upon his blankets, where he lay in silence, watching, with rolling and anxious eyes, the smallest movements of his enemies. Polwarth soon yielded to the impatience of his listeners, and continued—

"You are acquainted with Major Lincoln?"

"Major Lincoln!" grumbled three or four of the grenadiers—"is it of *him* that we want to hear?"

"One moment, my worthy 18ths; I shall come at the whole truth the sooner, by taking this indirect course."

"Hurrah! for Captain Pollywarreth!" shouted the rioters—"him that the ribbils massacred of a leg!"

"Thank you—thank you, my considerate friends—answer, fellow, without prevarication; you dare not deny to me your knowledge of Major Lincoln?"

After a momentary pause, a low voice was heard muttering among the blankets—

"Job knows all the Boston people; and Major Lincoln is a Boston boy."

"But with Major Lincoln you had a more particular acquaintance.—Restrain your impatience, men; these questions lead directly to the facts you wish to know." The rioters, who were profoundly ignorant of what sort of facts they were to be made acquainted with by this examination, looked at each other in uneasy doubt, but soon settled down again into their former deep silence.—"You know him better than any other gentleman of the army?"

"He promised Job to keep off the grannies, and Job agreed to run his ar'n'ds."

"Such an arrangement betrays a greater intimacy than is usual between a wise man and a fool! If you are then so close in league with him, I demand what has become of your associate?"

The young man made no reply.

"You are thought to know the reasons why he has left his friends," returned Polwarth, "and I now demand that you declare them."

"Declare!" repeated the simpleton, in his most unmeaning and helpless manner—"Job was never good at his schooling."

"Nay, then, if you are obstinate, and will not answer, I must withdraw, and permit these brave grenadiers to work their will on you."

This threat served to induce Job to raise his head, and assume that attitude and look of instinctive watchfulness that he had so recently abandoned. A slight movement of the crowd followed, and the terrible words of "Blood for blood!" again passed among them in sullen murmurs. The helpless youth, whom we have been obliged to call an idiot, for want of a better term, and because his mental imbecility removed him without the pale of legal responsibility, now stared wildly about him, with an increasing expression of reason, that might be ascribed to the force of that inward fire which preyed upon his vitals, and which seemed to purify the spirit in proportion as it consumed the material dross of his existence.

"It's ag'in the laws of the Bay, to beat and torment a fellow-creature," he said, with a solemn earnestness in his voice, that would have melted hearts of ordinary softness; "and, what is more, it's ag'in His holy book! If you hadn't made oven-wood of the Old North, and a horse-stable of the Old South, you might have gone to hear such expounding as would have made the hair rise on your wicked heads!"

The cries of "Have done wid his foolery!"—"The imp is playing his games on us!"—"As if his wooden mockery was a church at all fit for a ra'al Christian!"—were heard on every side, and they were succeeded by the often repeated and appalling threat of "Blood for blood!"

"Fall back, men, fall back!" cried Polwarth, flourishing his walking-stick in such a manner as effectually to enforce his orders; "wait for his confession before you judge.

—Fellow, this is the last and trying appeal to your truth—your life most probably depends on the answer. You are known to have been in arms against the crown.—Nay, I myself saw you in the field on that day when the troops a-a-a—countermarched from Lexington; since when you are known to have joined the rebels while the army went out to storm the intrenchment on the heights of Charlestown.” At this point in the recapitulation of the offences of Job, the captain was suddenly appalled by a glimpse at the dark and threatening looks that encircled him, and he concluded with a laudable readiness—“on that glorious day when his majesty’s troops scattered your provincial rabble like so many sheep driven from their pastures by dogs!”

The humane ingenuity of Polwarth was rewarded by a burst of loud and savage laughter. Encouraged by this evidence of his power over his auditors, the worthy captain proceeded with an increased confidence in his own eloquence.

“On that glorious day,” he continued, gradually warming with his subject, “many a gallant gentleman, and hundreds of fearless privates, met their fate. Some fell in open and manly fight, and according to the chances of regular warfare. Some—he-e-m—some have been mutilated; and will carry the marks of their glory with them to the grave.” His voice grew a little thick and husky as he proceeded; but, shaking off his weakness, he ended with an energy that he intended should curdle the heart of the prisoner,—“while, fellow, some have been murdered!”

“Blood for blood!” was heard again passing its fearful round. Without attempting any longer to repress the rising spirit of the rioters, Polwarth continued his interrogatories, entirely led away by the strength of his own feelings on this sensitive subject.

“Remember you such a man as Dennis M’Fuse?” he demanded in a voice of thunder; “he that was treacherously slain in your inmost trenches, after the day was won! Answer me, knave, were you not among the rabble, and did not your own vile hand the bloody deed?”

A few words were heard from Job, in a low, muttering tone, of which only “the rake-hellies,” and “the people will teach ’em the law!” were sufficiently distinct to be understood.

“Murder him! part him sowl from body!” exclaimed the fiercest of the grenadiers.

"Hold!" cried Polwarth; "but one moment more—I would relieve my mind from the debt I owe his memory. Speak, fellow; what know you of the death of the commander of these brave grenadiers?"

Job, who had listened to his words attentively, though his uneasy eyes still continued to watch the slightest movements of his foes, now turned to the speaker with a look of foolish triumph, and answered—

"The 18th came up the hill, shouting like roaring lions! but the Royal Irish had a death-howl, that evening, over their tallest man!"

Polwarth trembled with the violence of the passions that beset him; but, while with one hand he motioned to the men to keep back, with the other he produced the battered gorget from his pocket, and held it before the eyes of the simpleton.

"Know you this?" he demanded; "who sent the bullet through this fatal hole?"

Job took the ornament, and for a moment regarded it with an unconscious look. But his countenance gradually lighting with a ray of unusual meaning, he laughed in scornful exultation, as he answered—

"Though Job is a fool, he can shoot!"

Polwarth started back aghast, while the fierce resentments of his rude listeners broke through all restraint. They raised a loud and savage shout, as one man, filling the building with hoarse execrations and cries for vengeance. Twenty expedients to destroy their captive were named in a breath, and with all the characteristic vehemence of their nation. Most of them would have been irregularly adopted, had not the man who attended the burning hemp caught up a bundle of the flaming combustible, and shouted aloud—

"Smolder him in the fiery flames!—he's an imp of darkness; burren him, in his rags, from before the face of man!"

The barbarous proposition was received with a sort of frenzied joy, and in another moment a dozen handfuls of the oakum were impending above the devoted head of the helpless lad. Job made a feeble attempt to avert the dreadful fate that threatened him, but he could offer no other resistance than his own weakened arm, and the abject moanings of his impotent mind. He was enveloped in a cloud of black smoke, through which the forked flames had already begun to play, when a woman burst into the

throng, casting the fiery combustibles from her, on either side, as she advanced, with a strength that seemed supernatural. When she had reached the bed, she tore aside the smoking pile with hands that disregarded the heat, and placed herself before the victim, like a fierce lioness, at bay, in defence of her whelps. In this attitude she stood an instant, regarding the rioters with a breast that heaved with passions too strong for utterance, when she found her tongue, and vented her emotions with all the fearlessness of a woman's indignation.

"Ye monsters in the shape of men, what is't ye do!" she exclaimed, in a voice that rose above the tumult, and had the effect to hush every mouth. "Have ye bodies without hearts! the forms without the bowels of the creatures of God! Who made you judges and punishers of sins! Is there a father among you, let him come and view the anguish of a dying child! Is there a son, let him draw near, and look upon a mother's sorrow! Oh! ye savages, worse than the beasts of the howling wilderness, who have mercy on their kinds, what is't ye do—what is't ye do!"

The air of maternal intrepidity with which this burst from the heart was uttered, could not fail to awe the worst passions of the rioters, who gazed on each other in stupid wonder, as if uncertain how to act. The hushed and momentary stillness was, however, soon broken once more by the low, murmuring threat of "Blood for blood!"

"Cowards! dastards! soldiers in name, and demons in your deeds!" continued the undaunted Abigail—"come ye here to taste of human blood! Go—away with you to the hills! and face the men of the Bay, who stand ready to meet you with arms in their hands, and come not hither to bruise the broken reed! Poor, suffering, and stricken as he is, by a hand far mightier than yours, my child will meet you there, to your shame, in the cause of his country, and the law!"

This taunt was too bitter for the unnurtured tempers to which she appealed, and the dying spark of their resentment was at once kindled into a blaze by the galling gibe.

The rioters were again in motion, and the cry of "Burn the hag and the imp together!" was fiercely raised, when a man of a stout, muscular frame forced his way into the centre of the crowd, making room for the passage of a female, whose gait and attire, though her person was concealed by her mantle, announced her to be of a rank altogether superior to the usual guests of the warehouse. The

unexpected appearance, and lofty, though gentle bearing of this unlooked-for visitor, served to quell the rising uproar, which was immediately succeeded by so deep a silence, that a whisper could have been heard in that throng, which so lately resounded with violent tumult and barbarous execrations.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“Ay, sir, you shall find me reasonable; if it be so, I shall do that that is reason.”—*Slender*.

DURING the close of the foregoing scene, Polwarth was in a bewildered state, that rendered him utterly incapable of exertion, either to prevent or to assist the evil intentions of the soldiery. His discretion and all his better feelings were certainly on the side of humanity, but the idle vaunt of the simpleton had stirred anew the natural thirst for vengeance. He recognized at the first glance, in the wan, but speaking lineaments of the mother of Job, those faded remnants of beauty that he had traced, so lately, in the squalid female attendant who was seen lingering near the grave of Mrs. Lechmere. As she rushed before the men, with all the fearlessness of a mother who stood in defence of her child, the brightness of her dark eyes, aided as they were by the strong glare from the scattered balls of fire, and the intense expression of maternal horror that shone in every feature of her countenance, had imparted to her appearance a dignity and interest that greatly served to quell the unusual and dangerous passions that beset him. He was on the point of aiding her appeal by his authority and advice, when the second interruption to the brutal purpose of the men occurred, as just related. The effect of this strange appearance, in such a place, and at such a time, was not less instant on the captain than on the vulgar throng who surrounded him. He remained a silent and an attentive spectator.

The first sensation of the lady in finding herself in the centre of such a confused and unexpected throng, was unequivocally that of an alarmed and shrinking delicacy; but, forgetting her womanish apprehensions in the next moment, she collected the powers of her mind, like one sustained by high and laudable intentions, and, dropping

the silken folds of her calash, exhibited the pale, but lovely countenance of Cecil to the view of the wondering bystanders. After a moment of profound silence, she spoke—

“I know not why I find this fierce collection of faces around the sick-bed of that unfortunate young man,” she said; “but if it be with evil purpose, I charge you to relent, as you love the honor of your gallant profession, or fear the power of your leaders. I boast myself a soldier’s wife, and promise you, in the name of one who has the ear of Howe, pardon for what is past, or punishment for your violence, as you conduct yourselves.”

The rude listeners stared at each other in irresolute hesitation, seeming already to waver in their purpose, when the old grenadier, whose fierceness had so nearly cost Job his life, gruffly replied—

“If you’re an officer’s lady, madam, you’ll be knowing how to feel for the friends of him that’s dead and gone. I put it to the face of your ladyship’s reason, if it’s not too much for men to bear,—and they such men as the 18ths,—to hear a fool boasting on the highways and through the streets of the town, that he has been the death of the like of Captain M’Fuse, of the grenadiers of that same regiment!”

“I believe I understand you, friend,” returned Cecil, “for I have heard it whispered that the young man was believed to aid the Americans on the bloody day to which you allude—but if it is not lawful to kill in battle, what are you, whose whole trade is war?”

She was interrupted by half a dozen eager, though respectful voices, muttering, in the incoherent and vehement manner of their country, “It’s all a difference, my lady!” —“Fair fighting isn’t foul fighting, and foul fighting is murder!”—with many other similar half-formed and equally intelligible remonstrances. When this burst was ended, the same grenadier, who had before spoken, took on himself the office of explaining.

“If your ladyship spoke never a word again, ye’ve said the truth this time,” he answered, “though it isn’t exactly the truth at all. When a man is kill’t in the fair war, it’s a godsend; and no true Irishman will gainsay the same; but skulking behind a dead body, and taking aim into the flatures of a fellow-creature, is what we complain of against the bloody-minded rascal. Besides, wasn’t the day won? and even *his* death couldn’t give *them* the victory!”

"I know not all these nice distinctions in your dreadful calling, friend," Cecil replied, "but I have heard that many fell after the troops mounted the works."

"That did they; sure your ladyship is knowing all about it! and it's the more need that some should be punished for the murders! It's hard to tell when we've got the day with men who make a fight of it after they are fairly baitin!"

"That others suffered under similar circumstances," continued Cecil, with a quivering lip, and a tremulous motion of her eyelids, "I well know; but had never supposed it more than the usual fortune of every war. But even if this youth has erred—look at him!—is he an object for the resentment of men who pride themselves on meeting their enemies on equal terms! He has long been visited by a blow from a hand far mightier than yours, and even now is laboring, in addition to all other misfortunes, under that dangerous distemper whose violence seldom spares those it seizes. Nay, you, in the blindness of your anger, expose yourselves to its attacks; and when you think only of revenge, may become its victims!"

The crowd insensibly fell back as she spoke, and a large circle was left around the bed of Job, while many in the rear stole silently from the building, with a haste that betrayed how completely apprehension had got the better of their more evil passions. Cecil paused but an instant, and pursued her advantage.

"Go," she said; "leave this dangerous vicinity. I have business with this young man, touching the interests, if not the life, of one dear, deservedly dear, to the whole army, and would be left alone with him and his mother. Here is money—retire to your own quarters, and endeavor to avert the danger you have so wantonly braved, by care and regimen. Go; all shall be forgotten and pardoned."

The reluctant grenadier took her gold, and, perceiving that he was already deserted by most of his companions, he made an awkward obeisance to the fair being before him, and withdrew, not without, however, casting many a savage and sullen glance at the miserable wretch who had been thus singularly rescued from his vengeance. Not a soldier now remained in the building; and the noisy and rapid utterance of the retiring party, as each vehemently recounted his deeds, soon became inaudible in the distance.

Cecil then turned to those who remained, and cast a

rapid glance at each individual of the party. The instant she encountered the wondering look of Polwarth, the blood mantled her pale features once more, and her eyes fell, for an instant, in embarrassment, to the floor.

"I trust we have been drawn here for a similar purpose, Captain Polwarth," she said, when the slight confusion had passed away—"the welfare of a common friend?"

"You have not done me injustice," he replied. "When the sad office, which your fair cousin charged me with, was ended, I hastened hither to follow a clew which, I have reason to believe, will conduct us to——"

"What we most desire to find," said Cecil, involuntarily glancing her anxious eyes towards the other spectators. "But our first duty is humanity. Cannot this miserable young man be reconveyed to his own apartment, and have his hurts examined?"

"It may be done now, or after our examination," returned the captain, with a cool indifference that caused Cecil to look up at him in surprise. Perceiving the unfavorable impression his apathy had produced, Polwarth turned carelessly to a couple of men who were still curious lookers-on, at the outer door of the building, and called to them—"Here, Shearflint, Meriton, remove the fellow into yonder room."

The servants in waiting, who had been hitherto wondering witnesses of all that passed, received this mandate with strong disgust. Meriton was loud in his murmurs, and approached the verge of disobedience, before he consented to touch such an object of squalid misery. As Cecil, however, enforced the order by her wishes, the disagreeable duty was performed, and Job replaced on his pallet in the tower, from which he had been rudely dragged an hour before by the soldiers.

At the moment when all danger of further violence disappeared, Abigail had sunk on some of the lumber of the apartment, where she remained during the removal of her child, in a sort of stupid apathy. When, however, she perceived that they were now surrounded by those who were bent on deeds of mercy rather than of anger, she slowly followed into the little room, and became an anxious observer of the succeeding events.

Polwarth seemed satisfied with what had been done for Job, and now stood aloof, in sullen attendance on the pleasure of Cecil. The latter, who had directed every movement with female tenderness and care, bade the ser-

wants retire into the outer room, and wait her orders. When Abigail, therefore, took her place, in silence, near the bed of her child, there remained present, besides herself and the sick, only Cecil, the captain, and the unknown man, who had apparently led the former to the warehouse. In addition to the expiring flames of the oakum, the feeble light of a candle was shed through the room, merely rendering the gloomy misery of its tenants more striking.

Notwithstanding the high but calm resolution which Cecil had displayed in the foregoing scene with the rioters, and which still manifested itself in the earnest brightness of her intelligent eye, she appeared willing to profit by the duskiness of the apartment, to conceal her expressive features from the gaze of even the forlorn female. She placed herself in one of the shadows of the room, and partly raised the calash, by a graceful movement of one of her hands, while she addressed the simpleton.

"Though I have not come hither with any intent to punish, nor in any manner to intimidate you with threats, Job Pray," she said, with an earnestness that rendered the soft tones of her voice doubly impressive—"yet have I come to question you on matters that it would be wrong, as well as cruel in you, to misrepresent, or in any manner to conceal——"

"You have little cause to fear that anything but the truth will be uttered by my child," interrupted Abigail. "The same power that destroyed his reason has dealt tenderly with his heart—the boy knows no guile—would to God the same could be said of the sinful woman who bore him!"

"I hope the character you give your son will be supported by his conduct," replied Cecil; "with this assurance of his integrity, I will directly question him. But that you may see I take no idle liberty with the young man, let me explain my motives!" She hesitated a moment, and averted her face unconsciously, as she continued—"I should think, Abigail Pray, that my person must be known to you?"

"It is—it is," returned the impatient woman, who appeared to feel the feminine and polished elegance of the other a reproach to her own misery—"you are the happy and wealthy heiress of her whom I have seen this day laid in her vault. The grave will open for all alike! the rich and the poor, the happy as well as the wretched! Yes—yes, I know you!—you are the bride of a rich man's son!"

Cecil shook back the dark tresses that had fallen about her countenance, and raised her face, tinged with its richest bloom, as she answered, with an air of matronly dignity—

“If you then know of my marriage, you will at once perceive that I have the interest of a wife in Major Lincoln—I would wish to learn his movements of your son.”

“Of my boy! of Job! from the poor despised child of poverty and disease, would you learn tidings of your husband?—no—no, young lady, you mock us;—he is not worthy to be in the secrets of one so great and happy!”

“Yet am I deceived if he is not! Has there not been one called Ralph, a frequent inmate of your dwelling during the past year; and has he not been concealed here within a very few hours?”

Abigail started at this question, though she did not hesitate to answer without prevarication—

“It is true. If I am to be punished for harboring a being that comes I know whence, and goes I know whither, who can read the heart, and knows what man, by his own limited powers, could never know, I must submit. He was here yesterday; he may be here again to-night; for he comes and goes at will. Your generals and army may interfere, but such as I dare not forbid it!”

“Who accompanied him when he departed last?” asked Cecil, in a voice so low, that, but for the profound stillness of the place, it would have been inaudible.

“My child—my weak, unmeaning, miserable child!” said Abigail, with a reckless promptitude that seemed to court any termination to her misery, however sudden or adverse. “If it be treasonable to follow in the footsteps of that nameless man, Job has much to answer for!”

“You mistake my purpose—good, rather than evil, will attend your answers, should they be found true.”

“True!” repeated the woman, ceasing the rocking motion of her body, and looking proudly up into the anxious face of Cecil—“but you are great and powerful, and are privileged to open the wounds of the unhappy!”

“If I have said anything to hurt the feelings of a child, I shall deeply regret the words,” said Cecil, with gentle fervor—“I would rather be your friend than your oppressor, as you will learn when occasion offers.”

“No—no—you can never be a friend to *me*!” exclaimed the woman, shuddering; “the wife of Major Lincoln ought never to serve the interests of Abigail Pray!”

The simpleton, who had apparently lain in dull indifference to what was passing, raised himself now from among his rags, and said, with foolish pride—

“Major Lincoln’s lady has come to see Job, because Job is a gentleman’s son!”

“You are the child of sin and misery!” groaned Abigail, burying her head in her cloak—“would that you had never seen the light of day!”

“Tell me, then, Job, whether Major Lincoln himself has paid you this compliment, as well as I,” said Cecil, without regarding the conduct of the mother—“when did you see him last?”

“Perhaps I can put these questions in a more intelligible manner,” said the stranger, with a meaning glance of his eye towards Cecil, that she appeared instantly to comprehend. He turned then to Job, whose countenance he studied closely, for several moments, before he continued—“Boston must be a fine place for parades and shows, young man; do you ever go to see the soldiers exercise?”

“Job always keeps time in the marchings,” returned the simpleton; “’tis a grand sight to see the grannies treading it off to the awful sound of drums and trumps!”

“And Ralph,” said the other, soothingly—“does he march in their company too?”

“Ralph! he’s a great warrior! he teaches the people their trainings, out on the hills—Job sees him there every time he goes for the major’s provisions.”

“This requires some explanation,” said the stranger.

“’Tis easily obtained,” returned the observant Polwarth. “The young man has been the bearer of certain articles, periodically, from the country into the town, during the last six months, under the favor of a flag.”

The man mused a moment before he pursued the subject.

“When were you last among the rebels, Job,” he at length asked.

“You had best not call the people rebels,” muttered the young man, sullenly, “for they won’t put up with bitter names!”

“I was wrong, indeed,” said the stranger. “But when went you last for provisions?”

“Job got in last Sabba’day morning; and that’s only yesterday!”

"How happened it, fellow, that you did not bring the articles to me?" demanded Polwarth, with a good deal of impatient heat.

"He has unquestionably a sufficient reason for the apparent neglect," said the cautious and soothing stranger. "You brought them here, I suppose, for some good reason?"

"Ay! to feed his own gluttony!" muttered the irritated captain.

The mother of the young man clasped her hands together convulsively, and made an effort to rise and speak; but she sunk again into her humble posture, as if choked by emotions that were too strong for utterance.

This short, but impressive pantomime was unnoticed by the stranger, who continued his inquiries in the same cool and easy manner as before.

"Are they yet here?" he asked.

"Certain," said the unsuspecting simpleton; "Job has hid them till Major Lincoln comes back. Both Ralph and Major Lincoln forgot to tell Job what to do with the provisions."

"In that case I am surprised you did not pursue them with your load."

"Everybody thinks Job's a fool," muttered the young man; "but he knows too much to be lugging provisions out ag'in among the people. Why!" he continued, raising himself, and speaking, with a bright glare dancing across his eyes, that betrayed how much he prized the envied advantage—"the Bay-men came down with cart-loads of things to eat while the town is filled with hunger!"

"True. I had forgotten they were gone out among the Americans—of course they went under the flag that you bore in?"

"Job didn't bring any flag—insyngns carry the flags! He brought a turkey, a grand ham, and a little sa'ce—there wasn't any flag among them."

At the sound of these eatables, the captain pricked up his ears, and he probably would have again violated the rigid rules of decorum had not the stranger continued his questions.

"I see the truth of all you say, my sensible fellow," he observed. "It was easy for Ralph and Major Lincoln to go out by means of the same privilege that you used to enter?"

"To be sure," muttered Job, who, tired of the questions, had already dropped his head again among his blankets—"Ralph knows the way—he's Boston born!"

The stranger turned to the attentive bride, and bowed, as if he were satisfied with the result of his examination. Cecil understood the expression of his countenance, and made a movement towards the place where Abigail Pray was seated on a chest, betraying, by the renewed rocking of her body, and the low groans that from time to time escaped her, the agony of mind she endured.

"My first care," she said, speaking to the mother of Job, "shall be to provide for your wants; after which I may profit by what we have now gathered from your son."

"Care not for me and mine!" returned Abigail, in a tone of bitter resignation. "The last blow is struck, and it behooves such as we to bow our heads to it in submission. Riches and plenty could not save your grandmother from the tomb, and perhaps Death may take pity, ere long, on me. What do I say, sinner that I am! can I never bring my rebellious heart to wait his time!"

Shocked at the miserable despair that the other exhibited, and suddenly recollecting the similar evidences of a guilty life that the end of Mrs. Lechmere had revealed, Cecil continued silent, in sensitive distress. After a moment, to collect her thoughts, she said, with the meekness of a Christian, united to the soothing gentleness of her sex—

"We are surely permitted to administer to our earthly wants, whatever may have been our transgressions. At a proper time I will not be denied in my wish to serve you. Let us now go," she added, addressing her unknown companion. Then, observing Polwarth making an indication to advance to her assistance, she gently motioned him back, and anticipated his offer, by saying, "I thank you, sir—but I have Meriton, and this worthy man, besides my own maid without—I will not further interfere with your particular objects."

As she spoke, she bestowed a melancholy, though sweet smile on the captain, and left the tower and the building, before he could presume to dispute her pleasure. Notwithstanding Cecil and her companion had obtained from Job all that he could expect, or in fact had desired to know, Polwarth lingered in the room, making those preparations that should indicate an intention to depart. He found, at length, that his presence was entirely disregarded by both mother and child. The one was still sitting, with

her head bowed to her bosom, abandoned to her own sorrows, while the other had sunk into his customary dull lethargy, giving no other signs of life than by his labored and audible breathing. The captain, for a moment, looked upon the misery of the apartment, which wore a still more dreary aspect under the dull light of the paltry candle, as well as at the disease and suffering which were too plainly exhibited in the persons of its abject tenants; but the glance at neither served to turn him from his purpose. Temptation had beset the humble follower of Epicurus, in a form that never failed to subdue his most philosophic resolutions; and, in this instance, it prevailed once more over his humanity. Approaching the pallet of the simpleton, he spoke to him in a sharp voice, saying—

“You must reveal to me what you have done with the provisions with which Mr. Seth Sage has intrusted you, young man—I cannot overlook so gross a violation of duty, in a matter of such singular importance. Unless you wish to have the grannies of the 18th back upon you, speak at once, and speak truly.”

Job continued obstinately silent, but Abigail raised her head, and answered for her child—

“He has never failed to carry the things to the quarters of the major, whenever he got back. No, no—if my boy was so graceless as to steal, it would not be *him* that he would rob!”

“I hope so—I hope so, good woman; but this is a sort of temptation to which men yield easily in times of scarcity,” returned the impatient captain, who probably felt some inward tokens of his own frailty in such matters.—“If they had been delivered, would not I have been consulted concerning their disposition! The young man acknowledges that he quitted the American camp yesterday at an early hour.”

“No, no,” said Job; “Ralph made him come away on Saturda’-night. He left the people without his dinner!”

“And repaid his loss by eating the stores! Is this your honesty, fellow?”

“Ralph was in such a hurry that he wouldn’t stop to eat. Ralph’s a proper warrior, but he doesn’t seem to know how sweet it is to eat!”

“Glutton! gormandizer! thou ostrich of a man!” exclaimed the angry Polwarth—“is it not enough that you have robbed me of my own, but you must make me more conscious of my loss by thy silly prating!”

"If you really suspect my child of doing wrong to his employers," said Abigail, "you know neither his temper nor his breeding. I will answer for him, and with bitterness of heart do I say it, that nothing in the shape of food has entered his mouth for many long and weary hours. Hear you not his piteous longings for nourishment? God, who knows all hearts, will hear and believe his cry!"

"What say you, woman?" cried Polwarth, aghast with horror, "not eaten, did you say?—Why hast thou not, unnatural mother, provided for his wants?—why has he not shared in your meals?"

Abigail looked up into his face with eyes that gleamed with hopeless want, as she answered—

"Would I willingly see the child of my body perish of hunger? The last crumb he had was all that was left me, and that came from the hands of one, who, in better justice, should have sent me poison!"

"Nab don't know of the bone that Job found before the barracks," said the young man, feebly; "I wonder if the king knows how sweet bones are?"

"And the provisions, the stores!" cried Polwarth, nearly choking—"foolish boy, what hast thou done with the provisions?"

"Job knew the grannies couldn't find them under that oakum," said the simpleton, raising himself to point out their place of concealment, with silly exultation—"when Major Lincoln comes back, may be he'll give Nab and Job the bones to pick!"

Polwarth was no sooner made acquainted with the situation of the precious stores, than he tore them from their concealment, with the violence of a maniac. As he separated the articles with an unsteady hand, he rather panted than breathed; and during the short operation, every feature in his honest face was working with extraordinary emotion. Now and then he muttered in an undertone—"No food!"—"Suffering of inanition!" or some such expressive exclamation, that sufficiently explained the current of his thoughts. When all was fairly exposed, he shouted, in a tremendous voice—

"Shearflint! thou rascal! Shearflint—where have you hidden yourself?"

The reluctant menial knew how dangerous it was to hesitate answering a summons uttered in such a voice, and while his master was yet repeating his cries, he appeared

at the door of the little apartment, with a face expressive of the deepest attention.

"Light up the fire, thou prince of idlers!" Polwarth continued in the same high strain; "here is food, and there is hunger! God be praised that I am the man who is permitted to bring the two acquainted! Here, throw on oakum—light up, light up!"

As these rapid orders were accompanied by a corresponding earnestness of action, the servant, who knew his master's humor, sat himself most diligently at work to comply. A pile of the tarred combustible was placed on the dreary and empty hearth, and by a touch of the candle, it was lighted into a blaze. As the roar of the chimney and the bright glare were heard and seen, the mother and child both turned their longing eyes toward the busy actors in the scene. Polwarth threw aside his cane, and commenced slicing the ham with a dexterity that denoted great practice, as well as an eagerness that renewed the credit of his disgraced humility.

"Bring wood—hand down that apology for a gridiron—make coals, make coals at once, rascal," he said, at short intervals—"God forgive me, that I should ever have meditated evil to one suffering under the heaviest of curses!—D'y'e hear, thou Shearflint! bring more wood; I shall be ready for the fire in a minute."

"'Tis impossible, sir," said the worried domestic; "I have brought the smallest chip there is to be found—wood is too precious in Boston to be lying in the streets."

"Where do you keep your fuel, woman?" demanded the captain, unconscious that he addressed her in the same rough strain that he used to his menial—"I am ready to put down."

"You see it all! you see it all!" said Abigail, in the submissive tones of a stricken conscience; "the judgment of God has not fallen on me singly!"

"No wood! no provisions!" exclaimed Polwarth, speaking with difficulty—then, dashing his hand across his eyes, he continued to his man, in a voice whose hoarseness he intended should conceal his emotion—"thou villain, Shearflint, come hither—unstrap my leg."

The servant looked at him in wonder,—but an impatient gesture hastened his compliance.

"Split it into ten thousand fragments; 'tis seasoned and ready for the fire. The best of them, they of flesh I mean, are but useless encumbrances, after all! A cook

wants hands, eyes, nose, and palate, but I see no use for a leg!"

While he was speaking, the philosophic captain seated himself on the hearth with great indifference, and, by the aid of Shearflint, the culinary process was soon in a state of forwardness.

"There are people," resumed the diligent Polwarth, who did not neglect his avocation while speaking, "that eat but twice a day; and some who eat but once; though I never knew any man thrive who did not supply nature in four substantial and regular meals. These sieges are damnable visitations on humanity, and there should be plans invented to conduct a war without them. The moment you begin to starve a soldier, he grows tame and melancholy: feed him, and defy the devil! How is it, my worthy fellow? do you like your ham running or dry?"

The savory smell of the meat had caused the suffering invalid to raise his feverish body, and he sat watching, with greedy looks, every movement of his unexpected benefactor. His parched lips were already working with impatience, and every glance of his glassy eye betrayed the absolute dominion of physical want over his feeble mind. To this question he made the simple and touching reply of—

"Job isn't particular in his eating."

"Neither am I," returned the methodical gourmand, returning a piece of the meat to the fire, that Job had already devoured in imagination—"one would like to get it up well, notwithstanding the hurry. A single turn more, and it will be fit for the mouth of a prince. Bring hither that trencher, Shearflint—it is idle to be particular about crockery in so pressing a case. Greasy scoundrel, would you dish a ham in its gravy! What a nosegay it is after all! Come hither; help me to the bed."

"May the Lord, who sees and notes each kind thought of his creatures, bless and reward you for this care of my forlorn boy!" exclaimed Abigail, in the fulness of her heart; "but will it be prudent to give such strong nourishment to one in a burning fever?"

"What else would you give, woman? I doubt not he owes his disease to his wants. An empty stomach is like an empty pocket, a place for the devil to play his gambols in. 'Tis your small doctor who prates of a meagre regimen. Hunger is a distemper of itself, and no reasonable man who is above listening to quackery, will believe it can

be a remedy. Food is the prop of life—and eating, like a crutch to a maimed man.—Shearflint, examine the ashes for the irons of my supporter, and then dish a bit of the meat for the poor woman.—Eat away, my charming boy, eat away!” he continued, rubbing his hands in honest delight, to see the avidity with which the famishing Job received his boon. “The second pleasure in life is to see a hungry man enjoy his meal; the first being more deeply seated in human nature. This ham has the true Virginia flavor! Have you such a thing as a spare trencher, Shearflint? It is so near the usual hour, I may as well sup. It is rare, indeed, that a man enjoys two such luxuries at once!”

The tongue of Polwarth ceased the instant Shearflint administered to his wants; the warehouse into which he had so lately entered with such fell intent, exhibiting the strange spectacle of the captain, sharing, with social communion, in the humble repasts of its hunted and miserable tenants.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“Sir Thurio, give us leave, I pray, awhile;
We have some secrets to confer about.”

—*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

DURING the preceding exhibition of riot and degradation, in the Dock Square, a very different state of things existed beneath the roof of a proud edifice that stood in an adjacent street. As was usual at that hour of the night, the windows of Province-House were brilliant with lights as if in mockery of the naked dreariness of the neighboring church; and every approach to that privileged residence of the representative of royalty, was closely guarded by the vigilance of armed men. Into this favored dwelling it now becomes necessary to remove the scene, in order to pursue the thread of our unpretending narrative.

Domestics, in rich military liveries, might be seen gliding from room to room, in the hurry of a banquet—some bearing vessels of the most generous wines into the apartment where Howe entertained the leaders of the royal army, and others returning with the remnants of a feast, which, though sumptuously served, having felt the scarcity of the times, had offered more to the eyes than to the ap-

petites of the guests. Idlers, in the loose undress of their martial profession, loitered through the halls; and many a wistful glance, or lingering look, followed the odorous scents, as humbler menials received the viands to transport them into the more secret recesses of the building. Notwithstanding the life and activity which prevailed, every movement was conducted in silence and regularity, the whole of the lively scene affording a happy illustration of the virtues and harmony of order.

Within the walls of that apartment, to which every eye seemed directed as to a common centre, in anticipation of the slightest wish of those who revelled there, all was bright and cheerful. The hearth knew no want of fuel; the coarser workmanship of the floor was hid beneath rich and ample carpets, while the windows were nearly lost within the sweeping folds of curtains of figured damask. Everything wore an air of exquisite comfort, blended with a species of careless elegance. Even the most minute article of the furniture had been transported from that distant country, which was then thought to monopolize all the cunning arts of handicraft, to administer to the pleasures of those, who, however careless of themselves in moments of trial, courted the most luxurious indulgences in their hours of ease.

Along the centre of this gay apartment was spread the hospitable board of the entertainer. It was surrounded by men in the trappings of high military rank, though here and there might be seen a guest, whose plainer attire and dejected countenance betrayed the presence of one or two of those misjudging colonists, whose confidence in the resistless power of the crown began already to waver. The lieutenant of the king held his wonted place at the banquet, his dark visage expressing all the heartiness of a soldier's welcome, while he pointed out this or that favorite amongst an abundant collection of wines, that included the choicest liquors of Europe.

"For those who share the mess of a British general, you have encountered rude fare to-day, gentlemen," he cried; "though, after all, 'tis such as a British soldier knows how to fatten on, in the service of his master. Fill, gentlemen; fill in loyal bumpers; for we have neglected our allegiance."

Each glass now stood sparkling and overcharged with wine, when, after a short and solemn pause, the host pronounced aloud the magical words—"The King."—Every

voice echoed the name, after which there literally succeeded a breathless pause ; when an old man, in the uniform of an officer of the fleet, first proving his loyalty by flourishing on high his inverted glass, added, with hearty will—

“God bless him !”

“God bless him !” repeated the graceful leader, who has already been more than once named in these pages ; “and grant him a long and glorious reign ! and, should there be no treason in the wish, in death, a grave like yourself, worthy admiral—‘Sepulcrum sine sordibus ex-true.’”

“Like me !” echoed the blunt seaman, whose learning was somewhat impaired by hard and long service—“I am, it is true, none of your cabin-window gentry ; but his majesty might stoop lower than by favoring a faithful servant, like me, with his gracious presence.”

“Your pardon, sir ; I should have included, ‘*permissum arbitrio*.’”

The equivoque had barely excited a smile, when the sedate countenance of the commander-in-chief indicated that the subject was too serious for a jest. Nor did the naval chieftain appear to relish the unknown tongue ; for, quite as much, if not a little more, offended with the liberty taken with his own name, than with the privileged person of the sovereign, he somewhat smartly retorted—

“Permitted or not permitted, I command the fleet of his majesty in these waters, and it shall be noted as a cheerful day in our log-books, when you gentlemen of the army dismiss us to our duty again, on the high-seas. A sailor will grow as tired of doing nothing, as ever a soldier did of work, and I like ‘elbow-room,’ even in my coffin—ha, ha, ha—what d’ye think of that, master wit ?—ha, ha, ha,—what d’ye say to that ?”

“Quite fair, well deserved, and cuttingly severe, admiral,” returned the undisturbed soldier, smiling with perfect self-possession, as he sipped his wine. “But as you find confinement and leisure so irksome, I will presume to advise your seizing some of these impudent Yankees, who look into the port so often, not only robbing us of our stores, but offending so many loyal eyes with their traitorous presence.”

“I command a parley to be beaten,” interrupted the commander-in-chief, “and a truce to further hostilities. Where all have done their duty, and have done it so well,

even wit must respect their conduct. Let me advise you to sound the contents of that dusky-looking bottle, Mr. Graves ; I think you will approve the situation as an anchorage for the night."

The honest old seaman instantly drowned his displeasure in a glass of the generous liquor, and, smacking his lips after the potations, for he repeated the first on the moment, he exclaimed—

"Ah! you are too stationary, by half, to stir up the soul of your liquors. Wine should never slumber on its lees until it has been well rolled in the trough of a sea for a few months ; then, indeed, you may set it asleep, and yourself by the side of it, if you like a cat's nap."

"As orthodox a direction for the ripening of wine as was ever given by a bishop to his butler!" exclaimed his adversary. Another significant glance from his dark-looking superior again checked his wilful playfulness, when Howe profited by the silence, to say with the frank air of a liberal host—

"As motion is, just now, denied us, the only means I can devise, to prevent my wine from slumbering on its lees, is to drink it."

"Besides which, we are threatened with a visit from Mr. Washington, and his thirsty followers, who may save us all trouble in the matter, unless we prove industrious. In such a dilemma, Mr. Graves will not hesitate to pledge me in a glass, though it should be only to disappoint the rebels!" added Burgoyne, making a graceful inclination to the half-offended seaman.

"Ay, ay, I would do much more disagreeable things to cheat the rascals of their plunder," returned the mollified admiral, good-naturedly nodding his head before he swallowed his bumper.—"If there be any real danger of the loss of such liquid amber as this, 'twould be as well to send it along-side my ship, and I will hoist it in, and find it a berth, though it shares my own cot. I believe I command a fortress which neither Yankee, Frenchman, nor Don, would like to besiege, unless at a respectful distance."

The officers around him looked exceedingly grave, exchanging glances of great meaning, though all continued silent, as if the common subject of their meditations was too delicate to be loudly uttered in such a presence. At length the second in command, who still felt the coldness of his superior, and who had, hitherto, said nothing during the idle dialogue, ventured a remark, with the gravity

and distance of a man who was not certain of his welcome.

"Our enemies grow bold as the season advances," he said, "and it is past a doubt that they will find us employment in the coming summer. It cannot be denied but they conduct themselves with great steadiness in all their batteries, especially in this last, at the water-side; nor am I without apprehension that they will yet get upon the islands, and render the situation of the shipping hazardous."

"Get upon the islands! drive the fleet from their anchors!" exclaimed the veteran sailor, in undisguised amazement. "I shall account it a happy day for England, when Washington and his rabble trust themselves within reach of our shot!"

"God grant us a chance at the rascals with the bayonet in the open field," cried Howe, "and an end of these winter quarters! I say winter quarters, for I trust no gentleman can consider this army as besieged by a mob of armed peasants! We hold the town, and they the country; but when the proper time shall come—well, sir, your pleasure," he continued, interrupting himself to speak to an upper servant at his elbow.

The man, who had stood for more than a minute, in an attitude of respectful attention, anxious to catch the eye of his master, muttered his message in a low and hurried voice, as if unwilling to be heard by others, and at the same time conscious of the impropriety of whispering. Most of those around him turned their heads in polite indifference; but the old sailor, who sat too near to be totally deaf, had caught the words, "a lady," which was quite enough to provoke all his merriment, after such a free indulgence of the bottle. Striking his hand smartly on the table, he exclaimed, with a freedom that no other present could have presumed to use—

"A sail! a sail! by George, a sail! under what colors, friend? king's or rebels'? Here has been a blunder, with a vengeance! The cook has certainly been too late, or the lady is too early! ha, ha, ha—Oh! you are wicked, free livers in the army!"

The tough old tar enjoyed his joke exceedingly, chuckling with inward delight at his discovery. He was, however, alone in his merriment, none of the soldiers venturing to understand his allusions, any further than by exchanging a few stolen looks of unusual archness. Howe bit his lips,

with obvious vexation, and sternly ordered the man to repeat his errand in a voice that was more audible.

"A lady," said the trembling menial, "wishes to see your excellency, and she waits your pleasure, sir, in the library."

"Among his books, too!" shouted the admiral—"that would have better become you, my joking friend! I say, young man, is the girl young and handsome?"

"By the lightness of her step, sir, I should think her young; but her face was concealed under a hood."

"Ay! ay! the jade comes hooded into the house of the king! Damn me, Howe, but modesty is getting to be a rare virtue amongst you gentlemen on shore!"

"'Tis a plain case against you, sir, for even the servant, as you find, has detected that she is light of carriage," said the smiling Burgoyne, making half a motion toward rising. "It is probably some applicant for relief, or for permission to depart the place. Suffer me to see her, and spare yourself the pain of a refusal."

"Not at all," said Howe, gaining his feet with an alacrity that anticipated the more deliberate movement of the other—"I should be unworthy of the trust I hold, could I not lend an occasional ear to a petition. Gentlemen, as there is a lady in the case, I presume to trespass on your indulgence. Admiral, I commend you to my butler, who is a worthy fellow, and can give you all the cruises of the bottle before you, since it left the island of Madeira."

He inclined his head to his guests, and passed from the room with a hurried step, that did not altogether consult appearances. As he proceeded through the hall, his ears were saluted by another burst from the hearty old seaman, who, however, enjoyed his humor alone, the rest of the party immediately turning to other subjects, with well-bred dulness. On entering the room already mentioned, Howe found himself in the presence of the female, who, notwithstanding their apparent indifference, was at that very moment occupying the thoughts, and exercising the ingenuity of every man he had left behind him. Advancing at once to the centre of the apartment, with the ease and freedom of a soldier who felt himself without a superior, he asked, with a politeness somewhat equivocal—

"Why am I favored with this visit? and why has a lady, whose appearance shows she might command friends at any time, assumed this personal trouble?"

"Because I am a supplicant for a favor that might be

denied to one who petitioned coldly," returned a soft, tremulous voice, deep within the covering of a silken calash. "As time is wanting to observe the usual forms of applications, I have presumed to come in person, to prevent delay."

"And surely, one like you can have little reason to dread a repulse," said Howe, with an attempt at gallantry, that would have better become the man who had offered to be his substitute. While speaking, he advanced a step nigher to the lady, and, pointing to her hood, he continued—"Would it not be wise to aid your request with a view of a countenance that I am certain can speak better than any words?—whom have I the honor to receive, and what may be the nature of her business?"

"A wife, who seeks her husband," returned the female, dropping the folds of her calash, and exposing to his steady eyes the commanding loveliness of the chaste countenance of Cecil. The sudden annunciation of her character was forced from the lips of the unclaimed bride, by the freedom of a gaze to which she was unused; but the instant she had spoken, her eyes fell on the floor in embarrassment, and she stood deeply blushing at the strength of her own language, though preserving all the apparent composure and dignity of female pride. The English general regarded her beauty for a moment, with a pleased, though doubting eye, before he continued—

"Is he whom you seek within or without the town?"

"I much fear without!"

"And you would follow him into the camp of the rebels? This is a case that may require some deliberation. I feel assured I entertain a lady of great beauty; might I, in addition, know how to address her?"

"For my name I can have no reason to blush," said Cecil, proudly—" 'tis noble in the land of our common ancestors, and may have reached the ears of Mr. Howe—I am the child of the late Colonel Dynevor!"

"The niece of Lord Cardonnel!" exclaimed her auditor, in amazement, instantly losing the equivocal freedom of his manner in an air of deep respect—"I have long known that Boston contained such a lady; nor do I forget that she is accused of concealing herself from the attentions of the army, like one of the most obdurate of our foes—attentions which every man in the garrison would be happy to show her, from myself down to the lowest ensign.—Do me the honor to be seated!"

Cecil bowed her acknowledgments, but continued standing—

“I have neither time nor spirits to defend myself from such an imputation,” she answered—“though, should my own name prove no passport to your favor, I must claim it in behalf of him I seek.”

“Should he be the veriest rebel in the train of Washington, he has great reason to be proud of his fortune !”

“So far from ranking among the enemies of the king, he has already been lavish of his blood in behalf of the crown,” returned Cecil, unconsciously raising the calash again, with maiden bashfulness, as she felt the moment was approaching when she must declare the name of the man, whose influence over her feelings she had already avowed.

“And he is called—?”

The answer was given to this direct question in a low but distinct voice. Howe started when he heard the well-known name of an officer of so much consideration, though a meaning smile lighted his dark features, as he repeated her words in surprise—

“Major Lincoln! his refusal to return to Europe, in search of health, is then satisfactorily explained. Without the town did you say ! there must be some error.”

“I fear it is too true !”

The harsh features of the leader contracted again into their sternest look, and it was apparent how much he was disturbed by the intelligence.

“This is presuming too far on his privilege,” he muttered in an undertone.—“Left the place say you, without my knowledge and approbation, young lady ?”

“But on no unworthy errand !” cried the almost breathless Cecil, instantly losing sight of herself in her anxiety for Lionel—“private sorrows have driven him to an act, that, at another time, he would be the first to condemn, as a soldier.”

Howe maintained a cool, but threatening silence, that was far more appalling than any words could be. The alarmed wife gazed at his lowering face for a minute, as if to penetrate his secret thoughts ; then yielding, with the sensitiveness of a woman, to her worst apprehensions, she cried—

“Oh ! you would not avail yourself of this confession to do him harm ! Has he not bled for you ? lingered for months on the verge of the grave, in defence of your

cause? and will you now doubt him? Nay, sir, though chance and years may have subjected him, for a time, to your control, he is every way your equal, and will confront each charge before his royal master, let who may bring them against his spotless name!"

"'Twill be necessary," the other coldly replied.

"Nay, hearken not to my weak, unmeaning words," continued Cecil, wringing her hands in doubting distress; "I know not what I say. He has your permission to hold intercourse with the country weekly?"

"For the purpose of obtaining the supplies necessary to his past condition."

"And may he not have gone on such an errand, and under favor of the flag you yourself have cheerfully accorded?"

"In such a case would I not have been spared the pain of this interview?"

Cecil paused a moment, and seemed collecting her scattered faculties, and preparing her mind for some serious purpose. After a little time, she attempted a painful smile, saying, more calmly—

"I had presumed too far on military indulgence, and was even weak enough to believe the request would be granted to my name and situation."

"No name, no situation, no circumstances, can ever render——"

"Speak not the cruel words, lest they once more drive me from my recollection," interrupted Cecil. "First hear me, sir—listen to a wife and a daughter, and you will recall the cruel sentence."

Without waiting for a reply, she advanced with a firm and proud step to the door of the room, passing her astonished companion with an eye and a face beaming with the fulness of her object. In the outer passage she beckoned from among the loiterers in the hall, to the stranger who had accompanied her in the visit to the warehouse, and when he had approached, and entered the room, the door once more closed, leaving the spectators without wondering whence such a vision of purity could have made its way within the sullied walls of Province-House.

Many long and impatient minutes were passed by the guests in the banqueting-room, during the continuance of this mysterious interview. The jests of the admiral began to flag, just as his companions were inclined to think they were most merited, and the conversation assumed that

broken and disjointed character which betrays the wandering of the speakers' thoughts.

At length a bell rang, and orders came from the commander-in-chief, to clear the hall of its curious idlers. When none were left but the regular domestics of the family, Howe appeared, supporting Cecil, closely hooded, to the conveyance that awaited her presence at the gate. The air of their master communicated a deep respect to the manners of the observant menials, who crowded about their persons, to aid the departure, with officious zeal. The amazed sentinels dropped their arms, with the usual regularity, to their chieftain, as he passed to the outer portal in honor of his unknown companion, and eyes met the expressive glances of eyes, as all who witnessed the termination of this visit sought, in the countenances of those around them, some solution of its object.

When Howe resumed his seat at the table, another attempt was made by the admiral to renew the subject ; but it was received with an air so cold, and a look so pointedly severe, that even the careless son of the ocean forgot his humor under the impression of so dark a frown.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march—”—SCOTT.

CECIL suffered the night to advance a little, before she left Tremont Street, to profit by the permission to leave the place, her communication had obtained from the English general. It was, however, far from late when she took leave of Agnes, and commenced her expedition, still attended by Meriton and the unknown man, with whom she has already, more than once, made her appearance in our pages. At the lower part of the town she left her vehicle, and pursuing the route of several devious and retired streets, soon reached the margin of the water. The wharves were deserted and still. Indicating the course by her own light and hurried footsteps, to her companions, the youthful bride moved unhesitatingly along the rough planks, until her progress was checked by a large basin, between two of the ordinary wooden piers which line the shores of the place. Here she paused for a moment,

in doubt, as if fearful there had been some mistake, when the figure of a boy was seen advancing out of the shadows of a neighboring store-house.

"I fear you have lost your way," he said, when within a few feet of her, where he stood, apparently examining the party with rigid scrutiny. "May I venture to ask whom or what you seek?"

"One who is sent hither on private duty, by orders from the commander-in-chief."

"I see but two," returned the lad, hesitating—"where is the third?"

"He lingers in the distance," said Cecil, pointing to Meriton, whose footsteps were much more guarded than those of his mistress. "Three is our number, and we are all present."

"I beg a thousand pardons," returned the youth, dropping the folds of a sailor's overcoat, under which he had concealed the distinguishing marks of a naval dress, and raising his hat at the same moment, with great respect; "my orders were to use the utmost precaution, ma'am, for, as you hear, the rebels sleep but little to-night!"

"'Tis a dreadful scene I leave, truly, sir," returned Cecil, "and the sooner it will suit your convenience to transport us from it, the greater will be the obligation you are about to confer."

The youth once more bowed, in submission to her wishes, and requested the whole party to follow whither he should lead. A very few moments brought them to a pair of water-stairs, where, under cover of the duskiess thrown upon the basin from the wharf, a boat lay concealed, in perfect readiness to receive them.

"Be stirring, boys!" cried the youth, in a tone of authority; "ship your oars as silently as if stealing away from an enemy. Have the goodness, ma'am, to enter, and you shall have a quick and safe landing on the other shore, whatever may be the reception of the rebels."

Cecil and her two attendants complied without delay, when the boat glided into the stream with a velocity that promised a speedy verification of the words of the midshipman. The most profound stillness reigned among these nocturnal adventurers, and by the time they had rowed a short distance, the bride began to lose an immediate consciousness of her situation in contemplation of the scene.

The evening was already milder, and by one of those sudden changes, peculiar to the climate, it was rapidly be-

coming even bland and pleasant. The light of a clear moon fell upon the town and harbor, rendering the objects of both visible, in mellowed softness. The huge black hulls of the vessels of war rested sullenly on the waters, like slumbering leviathans, without even a sail or a passing boat, except their own, to enliven the view in the direction of the port. On the other hand, the hills of the town rose, in beautiful relief, against the clear sky, with here and there a roof or a steeple reflecting the pale light of the moon. The bosom of the place was as quiet as if its inhabitants were buried in midnight sleep; but behind the hills, in a circuit extending from the works on the heights of Charlestown, to the neck, which lay in open view of the boat, there existed all the evidences of furious warfare. During the few preceding nights, the Americans had been more than commonly diligent in the use of their annoyances, but now they appeared to expend their utmost energies upon their enemies. Still they spared the town, directing the weight of their fire at the different batteries which protected the approaches to the place, as already described, along the western borders of the peninsula.

The ears of Cecil had long been accustomed to the uproar of arms, but this was the first occasion in which she was ever a witness of the mingled beauties and terrors of a cannonade at night. Suffering the calash to fall, she shook back the dark tresses from her face, and, leaning over the sides of the little vessel, listened to the bursts of the artillery, and gazed on the sudden flashes of vivid light that mocked the dimmer illumination of the planet, with an absorbed attention that momentarily lured her into forgetfulness. The men pulled their light boat with muffled oars, and so still was its progress, that there were instants when even the shot might be heard rattling among the ruins they had made.

"It's amazement to me, madam," said Meriton, "that so many British generals, and brave gentleman as there is in Boston, should stay in such a little spot to be shot at by a parcel of countrymen, when there is Lon'on, as still and as safe, at this blessed moment, as a parish church-yard at midnight!"

Cecil raised her eyes at this interruption, and perceived the youth gazing at her countenance in undisguised admiration of its beauty. Blushing, and once more concealing her features beneath her calash, she turned away from the view of the conflict, in silence.

"The rebels are free with their gunpowder to-night!" said the midshipman.—"Some of their cruisers have picked up another of our store-ships, I fancy, or Mr. Washington would not make such a noisy time of it, when all honest people should be thinking of their sleep. Don't you believe, ma'am, if the admiral would warp three or four of our heaviest ships up into the channel, back of the town, it would be a short method of lowering the conceit of these Yankees?"

"Really, sir, I am so little acquainted with military matters," returned Cecil, suffering her anxious features to relax into a smile, "that my opinion, should I venture to give one, would be utterly worthless."

"Why, young gentleman," said Meriton, "the rebels drove a galley out of the river, a night or two ago, as I can testify myself, having stood behind a large brick store, where I saw the whole affair, most beautifully conducted!"

"A very fit place for one like you, no doubt, sir," returned the midshipman, without attempting to conceal his disgust at so impertinent an interruption—"do you know what a galley is, ma'am? nothing but a small vessel cut down, with a few heavy guns, I do assure you. It would be a very different affair with a frigate or a two-decker! Do but observe what a charming thing our ship is, ma'am—I am sure so beautiful a lady must know how to admire a handsome ship!—she lies hereaway, nearly in a range with the second island."

To please the earnest youth Cecil bent her head toward the quarter he wished, and murmured a few words in approbation of his taste. But the impatient boy had narrowly watched the direction of her eyes, and she was interrupted by his exclaiming, in manifest disappointment—

"What! that shapeless hulk, just above the castle! she is an old Dutch prize, en flute, ay, older than my grandmother, good old soul; and it wouldn't matter the value of a piece of junk, into which end you stepped her bowsprit! One of my school-fellows, Jack Willoughby, is a reefer on board her; and he says that they can just get six knots out of her, on her course in smooth water with a fresh breeze, allowing seven knot for leeway! Jack means to get rid of her the moment he can catch the admiral running large; for the Graveses live near the Willoughbys in town, and he knows all the soundings about the old man's

humor. No, no, ma'am ; Jack would give every shot in his lockers to swing a hammock between two of the beams of our ship. Do excuse me, one moment ;"—presuming to take one of the hands of Cecil, though with sufficient delicacy, as he pointed out his favorite vessel—"There, ma'am, now you have her ! she that's so taut-rigged, with a flying-jib-boom, and all her top-gallant-yards stopped to her lower rigging—we send them down every night at gun-fire, and cross them again next morning as regularly as the bell strikes eight.—Isn't she a sweet thing, ma'am ? for I see she has caught your eye at last, and I am sure you can't wish to look at any other ship in port."

Cecil could not refuse her commendations to this eloquent appeal, though at the next moment she would have been utterly at a loss to distinguish the much-admired frigate from the despised store-ship.

"Ay, ay, madam, I knew you would like her when you once got a fair glimpse at her proportions," continued the delighted boy ; "though she is not half so beautiful on her broadside, as when you can catch her lasking, especially on her larboard bow.—Pull, long and strong, men, and with a light touch of the water—these Yankees have ears as long as borricoes, and we are getting in with the land. This set-down at Dorchester's neck will give you a long walk, ma'am, to Cambridge, but there was no possibility of touching the rebels anywhere else to-night, or, as you see, we should have gone right into the face of their cannon."

"Is it not a little remarkable," said Cecil, willing to pay the solicitude of the boy to amuse her, by some reply, "that the colonists, while they invest the town so closely on the north and west, should utterly neglect to assail it on the south ? for I believe they have never occupied the hills in Dorchester at all ; and yet it is one of the points nearest to Boston."

"It is no mystery at all !" returned the boy, shaking his head with all the sagacity of a veteran—"it would bring another Bunker Hill about their ears ; for you see it is the same thing at this end of the place that Charlestown neck is at the other !—a light touch, men, a light touch !" he continued, dropping his voice, as they approached the shore ;—"besides, ma'am, a fort on that hill could throw its shot directly on our decks, a thing the old man would never submit to ; and that would either bring on a regular hammering match, or a general clearing out of the fleet ; and

then what would become of the army?—No, no—the Yankees wouldn't risk driving the codfish out of their bay, to try such an experiment!—Lay on your oars, boys, while I take a squint along this shore, to see if there are any Jonahs cooling themselves near the beach, by moonlight."

The obedient seamen rested from their labors, while their youthful officer stood up in the boat, and directed a small night-glass over the intended place of landing. The examination proved entirely satisfactory, and in a low, cautious voice, he ordered the men to pull into a place where the shadow of the hills might render the landing still less likely to be observed.

From this moment the most profound silence was observed, the boat advancing swiftly, though under perfect command, to the desired spot, where it was soon heard grazing upon the bottom, as it gradually lost its motion, and finally became stationary. Cecil was instantly assisted to the land whither she was followed by the midshipman, who jumped upon the shore with great indifference, and approached the passenger, from whom he was now about to part.

"I only hope that those you next fall in with may know how to treat you as well as those you leave," said the boy, approaching, and offering his hand, with the frankness of an older seaman, to Cecil—"God bless you, my dear ma'am; I have two little sisters at home, nearly as handsome as yourself; and I never see a woman in want of assistance, but I think of the poor girls I've left in old England—God bless you, once more—I hope when we meet again, you will take a nearer view of the——"

"You are not likely to part so soon as you imagine," exclaimed a man, springing on his feet, from his place of concealment behind a rock, and advancing rapidly on the party—"offer the least resistance, and you are all dead."

"Shove off, men, shove off, and don't mind me!" cried the youth, with admirable presence of mind—"For God's sake, save the boat, if you die for it!"

The seamen obeyed with practised alacrity, when the boy darted after them with the lightness of his years, and, making a desperate leap, caught the gunwale of the barge, into which he was instantly drawn by the sailors. A dozen armed men had by this time reached the edge of the water, and as many muskets were pointed at the retreating party, when he who had first spoken, cried—

"Not a trigger!—the boy has escaped us, and he de-

serves his fortune !—Let us secure those who remain , but if a single gun be fired, it will only draw the attention of the fleet and castle.”

His companions, who had acted with the hesitation of men that were not assured the course they took was correct, willingly dropped the muzzles of their pieces, and in another instant the boat was ploughing its way toward the much-admired frigate, at a distance which would probably have rendered their fire quite harmless. Cecil had hardly breathed during the short period of uncertainty ; but when the sudden danger was passed, she prepared herself to receive their captors with the perfect confidence which an American woman seldom fails to feel in the mildness and reason of her countrymen. The whole party, who now approached her, were dressed in the ordinary habiliments of husbandmen, mingled, in a slight degree, with the more martial accoutrements of soldiers. They were armed with muskets only, which they wielded like men acquainted with all the uses of the weapon, at the same time that they were unaccustomed to the mere manual of the troops.

Every fibre of the body of Meriton, however, shook with fear, as he found this unexpected guard encircling their little party, nor did the unknown man who had accompanied them appear entirely free from apprehension. The bride still maintained her self-possession, supported either by her purpose, or her greater familiarity with the character of the people into whose hands she had fallen.

When the whole party were posted within a few feet of them, they dropped the butts of their muskets on the ground, and stood patient listeners to the ensuing examination. The leader of the party, who was only distinguished from his companions by a green cockade in his hat, which Cecil had heard was the symbol of a subaltern officer among the American troops, addressed her in a calm, but steady tone—

“It is unpleasant to question a woman,” he said, “and especially one of your appearance ; but duty requires it of me. What brings you to this unfrequented point, in the boat of a king’s ship, and at this unusual hour of the night ?”

“I come with no intent to conceal my visit from any eyes,” returned Cecil ; “for my first wish is to be conducted to some officer of rank, to whom I will explain my object. There are many that I should know, who will not hesitate to believe my words.”

"We none of us profess to doubt your truth ; we only act with caution, because it is required by circumstances. —Cannot the explanation be made to me ?—for I dislike the duty that causes trouble to a female."

"'Tis impossible !" said Cecil, involuntarily shrinking within the folds of her mantle.

"You came at a most unfortunate moment," said the other, musing ; "and I fear you will pass an uneasy night, in consequence. By your tongue, I think you are an American ?"

"I was born among those roofs, which you may see on the opposite peninsula."

"Then we are of the same town," returned the officer, stepping back in a vain attempt to get a glimpse of those features which were concealed beneath the hood. He made no attempt, however, to remove the silk ; nor did he in the slightest manner convey any wish of a nature that might be supposed to wound the delicacy of her sex ; but finding himself unsuccessful, he turned away, as he added—"and I grow tired of remaining where I can see the smoke of my own chimneys, at the same time I know that strangers are seated around the hearths below !"

"None wish more fervently than I, that the moment had arrived when each might enjoy his own, in peace and quietness."

"Let the Parliament repeal their laws, and the king recall his troops," said one of the men, "and there will be an end of the struggle at once. We don't fight because we love to shed blood !"

"He would do both, friend, if the counsel of one so insignificant as I could find weight in his royal mind."

"I believe there is not much difference between a royal mind and that of any other man, when the devil gets hold of it !" bluntly exclaimed another of the party. "I've a notion the imp is as mischievous with a king as with a cobbler !"

"Whatever I may think of the conduct of his ministers," said Cecil, coldly, "'tis unpleasant to me to discuss the personal qualities of my sovereign."

"Why, I meant no offence ; though when the truth is uppermost in a man's thoughts, he is apt to let it out," returned the soldier. After this uncouth apology, he continued silent, turning away like one who felt dissatisfied with himself for what he had done.

In the meantime the leader had been consulting with

one or two of his men aside. He now advanced again, and delivered the result of their united wisdom.

"Under all circumstances, I have concluded," he said, speaking in the first person, in deference to his rank, though in fact he had consented to change his own opinion at the instigation of his advisers, "to refer you for information to the nearest general officer, under the care of these two men, who will show you the way. They both know the country, and there is not the least danger of their mistaking the road."

Cecil bowed in entire submission to this characteristic intimation of his pleasure, and declared her anxiety to proceed. The officer held another short consultation with the two guides which soon terminated by his issuing orders to the rest of the detachment to prepare to depart. Before they separated, one of the guides, or, more properly, guards, approached Meriton, and said, with a deliberation that might easily be mistaken for doubt—

"As we shall be only two to two, friend, will it not be as well to see what you have got secreted about your person, as it may prevent any hard words or difficulties hereafter? You will see the reason of the thing, I trust, and make no objection."

"Not at all, sir, not at all!" returned the trembling valet, producing his purse, without a moment's hesitation; "it is not heavy, but what there is in it, is of the best English gold; which I expect is much regarded among you who see nothing but rebel paper!"

"Much as we set store by it, we do not choose to rob for it," returned the soldier, with cool contempt. "I wish to look for weapons, and not for money."

"But, sir, as I unluckily have no weapons, had you not better take my money? there are ten good guineas, I do assure you; and not a light one among them all, 'pon honor! besides several pieces of silver."

"Come, Allen," said the other soldier, laughing, "it's no great matter whether that gentleman has arms or not, I believe. His comrade, here, who seems to know rather better what he is about, has none, at any rate; and for one of two men, I am willing to trust the other."

"I do assure you," said Cecil, "that our intentions are peaceable, and that your charge will prove in no manner difficult."

The men listened to the earnest tones of her sweet voice with much deference, and in a few moments the two parties

separated, to proceed on their several ways. While the main body of the soldiers ascended the hill, the guides of Cecil took a direction which led them around its base. Their route lay toward the low neck, which connected the heights with the adjacent country, and their progress was both diligent and rapid. Cecil was often consulted as to her ability to endure the fatigue, and repeated offers were made to accommodate their speed to her wishes. In every other respect she was totally disregarded by the guides, who, however, paid much closer attention to her companions, each soldier attaching himself to one of her followers, whom he constantly regarded with a watchful and wary eye.

"You seem cold, friend," said Allen to Meriton, "though I should call the night quite pleasant for the first week in March!"

"Indeed I'm starved to the bones!" returned the valet, with a shivering that would seem to verify his assertion—"It's a very chilly climate is this of America, especially of nights! I never really felt such a remarkable dampness about the throat before, within memory, I do assure you."

"Here is another handkerchief," said the soldier, throwing him a common 'kerchief from his pocket—"wrap it round your neck, for it gives me an ague to hear your teeth knocking one another about so."

"I thank you, sir, a thousand times," said Meriton, producing his purse, again, with an instinctive readiness—"what may be the price?"

The man pricked up his ears, and dropping his musket from the guarded position in which he had hitherto carried it, he drew closer to the side of his prisoner, in a very companionable way, as he replied—

"I did not calculate on selling the article; but if you have need of it, I wouldn't wish to be hard."

"Shall I give you one guinea, or two, Mr. Rebel?" asked Meriton, whose faculties were utterly confounded by his terror.

"My name is Allen, friend, and we like civil language in the Bay," said the soldier. "Two guineas for a pocket handkerchief! I couldn't think of imposing on any man so much!"

"What shall it be then, half a guinea, or four half-crown pieces?"

"I didn't at all calculate to part with the handkerchief

when I left home—it's quite new, as you can see by holding it up, in this manner, to the moon—besides, you know, now there is no trade, these things come very high.—Well, if you are disposed to buy, I don't wish to crowd ; you may take it, finally, for the two crowns."

Meriton dropped the money into his hands, without hesitation, and the soldier pocketed the price, perfectly satisfied with his bargain and himself, since he had sold his goods at a clear profit of about three hundred per cent. He soon took occasion to whisper to his comrade, that in his opinion "he had made a good trade ;" and laying their heads together, they determined that the bargain was by no means a bad wind-fall. On the other hand, Meriton, who knew the difference in value between cotton and silk quite as well as his American protectors, was equally well satisfied with the arrangement ; though his contentment was derived from a very different manner of reasoning. From early habit, he had long been taught to believe, that every civility, like patriotism in the opinion of Sir Robert Walpole, had its price ; and his fears had rendered him somewhat careless about the amount of the purchase-money. He now considered himself as having a clear claim on the protection of his guard, and his apprehensions gradually subsided into security under the soothing impression.

By the time this satisfactory bargain was concluded, and each party was lawfully put in possession of his own, they had reached the low land already mentioned as the "neck." Suddenly the guard stopped, and bending forward, in the attitude of deep attention, they seemed to listen, intently, to some faint and distant sounds, that were, for moments, audible in the intervals of the cannonade.

"They are coming," said one to the other ; "shall we go on, or wait until they've passed?"

The question was answered in a whisper, and, after a short consultation, they determined to proceed.

The attention of Cecil had been attracted by this conference, and the few words which had escaped her guides ; and, for the first time, she harbored some little dread as to her final destination. Full of the importance of her errand, the bride now devoted every faculty to detect the least circumstance that might have a tendency to defeat it. She trod so lightly on the faded herbage as to render her own footsteps inaudible, and more than once she was

about to request the others to imitate her example, that no danger might approach them unexpectedly. At length her doubts were relieved, though her wonder was increased, by distinctly hearing the lumbering sounds of wheels on the frozen earth, as if innumerable groaning vehicles were advancing with slow and measured progress. In another instant her eyes assisted the organs of hearing, and by the aid of the moon her doubts, if not her apprehensions, were entirely removed.

Her guards now determined on a change of purpose, and withdrew with their prisoners within the shadow of an apple tree that stood on the low land, but a few paces from the line of the route evidently taken by the approaching vehicles. In this position they remained for several minutes, attentive observers of what was passing around them.

"Our men have woke up the British by their fire," said one of the guards; "and all their eyes are turned to the batteries!"

"Yes, it's very well as it is," returned his comrade; "but if the old brass congress mortar hadn't gi'n way yesterday, there would be a different sort of roaring. Did you ever see the old congress?"

"I can't say I ever saw the cannon itself, but I have seen the bombs fifty times; and pokerish-looking things they be, especially in a dark night—but hush, here they come."

A large body of men now approached, and moved swiftly past them, in deepest silence, defiling at the foot of the hills, and marching toward the shores of the peninsula. The whole of this party was attired and accoutred much in the fashion of those who had received Cecil. One or two who were mounted, and in more martial trappings, announced the presence of some officers of higher rank. At the very heels of this detachment of soldiers, came a great number of carts, which took the route that led directly up to the neighboring heights. After these came another, and more numerous body of troops, who followed the teams, the whole moving in the profoundest stillness, and with the diligence of men who were engaged in the most important undertaking. In the rear of the whole, another collection of carts appeared, groaning under the weight of large bundles of hay, and other military preparations of defence. Before this latter division left the low land, immense numbers of the closely-packed bundles were tum-

bled to the ground, and arranged, with a quickness almost magical, in such a manner as to form a light breast-work across the low ground, which would otherwise have been completely exposed to be swept by the shot of the royal batteries; a situation of things that was believed to have led to the catastrophe of Breed's, the preceding summer.

Among the last of those who crossed the neck, was an officer on horseback, whose eye was attracted by the group who stood as idle spectators under the tree. Pointing out the latter object to those around him, he rode nigher to the party, and leaned forward in his saddle to examine their persons—

"How's this?" he exclaimed—"a woman and two men under the charge of sentinels! Have we then more spies among us?—cut away the tree, men; we have need of it, and let in the light of the moon upon them!"

The order was hardly given before it was executed, and the tree fell with a despatch that, to any but an American, would appear incredible. Cecil stepped aside from the impending branches, and by moving into the light, betrayed the appearance of a gentlewoman by her mien and apparel.

"Here must be some mistake!" continued the officer—"why is the lady thus guarded?"

One of the soldiers, in a few words, explained the nature of her arrest, and in return received directions, anew, how to proceed. The mounted officer now put spurs into his horse, and galloped away, in eager pursuit of more pressing duties, though he still looked behind him, so long as the deceptive light enabled him to distinguish either form or features.

"'Tis advisable to go on the heights," said the soldier, "where we may find the commanding general."

"Anywhere," returned Cecil, confused with the activity and bustle that had passed before her eyes, "or anything, to be relieved from this distressing delay."

In a very few moments they reached the summit of the nearest of the two hills, where they paused just without the busy circle of men who labored there, while one of the soldiers went in quest of the officer in command. From the point where she now stood, Cecil had an open view of the port, the town, and most of the adjacent country. The vessels still reposed heavily on the waters, and she fancied that the youthful midshipman was already nestling safe in his own hammock, on board the frigate, whose tall and

tapering spars rose against the sky in such beautiful and symmetrical lines. No evidences of alarm were manifested in the town ; but, on the contrary, the lights were gradually disappearing, notwithstanding the heavy cannonade which still roared along the western side of the peninsula ; and it was probable that Howe, and his unmoved companions, yet continued their revels, with the same security in which they had been left two short hours before. While, with the exception of the batteries, everything in the distance was still, and apparently slumbering, the near view was one of life and activity. Mounds of earth were already rising on the crest of the hill ; laborers were filling barrels with earth and sand ; fascines were tumbling about from place to place, as they were wanted ; and yet the stillness was only interrupted by the unremitting strokes of the pick, the low and earnest hum of voices, or the crashing of branches, as the pride of the neighboring orchards came crushing to the earth. The novelty of the scene beguiled Cecil of her anxiety, and many minutes passed unheeded by. Fifty times parties, or individuals amongst the laborers, approaching near her person, paused to gaze a moment at the speaking and sweet features that the placid light of the moon rendered even more than usually soft, and then pushed on in silence, endeavoring to repair, by renewed diligence, the transient forgetfulness of their urgent duties. At length the man returned, and announced the approach of the general who commanded on the hill. The latter was a soldier of middle age, of calm and collected deportment, roughly attired for the occasion, and bearing no other symbol of his rank than the distinctive crimson cockade, in one of the large military hats of the period.

"You find us in the midst of our labors," he pleasantly observed, as he approached ; "and will overlook the delay I have given you. It is reported you left the town this evening?"

"Within the hour."

"And Howe—dreams he of the manner in which we are likely to amuse him in the morning?"

"It would be affectation in one like me," said Cecil, modestly, "to decline answering questions concerning the views of the royal general ; but still you will pardon me if I say, that in my present situation, I could wish to be spared the pain of even confessing my ignorance."

"I acknowledge my error," the officer unhesitatingly

answered. After a short pause, in which he seemed to muse, he continued—"this is no ordinary night, young lady, and it becomes my duty to refer you to the general commanding this wing of the army. He possibly may think it necessary to communicate your detention to the commander-in-chief."

"It is he I seek, sir, and would most wish to meet."

He bowed, and, giving his orders to a subaltern in a low voice, walked away, and was soon lost in the busy crowd that came and went in constant employment, around the summit of the hill. Cecil lingered a single moment after her new conductor had declared his readiness to proceed, to cast another glance at the calm splendor of the sea and bay; the distant and smoky roofs of the town; the dim objects that moved about the adjacent eminence, equally and similarly employed with those around her; and then raising her calash, and tightening the folds of her mantle, she descended the hill with the light and elastic steps of youth.

CHAPTER XXX.

"The rebel vales, the rebel dales,
With rebel trees surrounded,
The distant woods, the hills and floods,
With rebel echoes sounded."—*The Battle of the Kegs.*

THE enormous white cockade that covered nearly one side of the little hat of her present conductor, was the only symbol that told Cecil she was now committed to the care of one who held the rank of captain, among those who battled for the rights of the colonies. No other part of his attire was military, though a cut-and-thrust was buckled to his form, which, from its silver guard, and formidable dimensions, had probably been borne by some of his ancestors, in the former wars of the colonies. The disposition of its present wearer was, however, far from that belligerent nature that his weapon might be thought to indicate, for he tendered the nicest care and assiduity to the movements of his prisoner.

At the foot of the hill, a wagon, returning from the field, was put in requisition by this semi-military gallant; and, after a little suitable preparation, Cecil found herself seated on a rude bench by his side, in the vehicle; while

her own attendants, and the two private men, occupied its bottom in still more social affinity. At first their progress was slow and difficult, return carts, literally by hundreds, impeding the way; but when they had once passed the heavy-footed beasts who drew them, they proceeded in the direction of Roxbury, with greater rapidity. During the first mile, while they were extricating themselves from the apparently interminable line of carts, the officer directed his whole attention to this important and difficult manœuvre; but when their uneasy vessel might be said to be fairly sailing before the wind, he did not choose to neglect those services, which, from time immemorial, beautiful women in distress have had a right to claim of men in his profession.

"Now do not spare the whip," he said to the driver, at the moment of their deliverance; "but push on, for the credit of horse-flesh, and to the disgrace of all horned cattle. This near beast of yours should be a tory, by his gait and his reluctance to pull in the traces for the common good—treat him as such, friend, and, in turn, you shall receive the treatment of a sound whig, when we make a halt. You have spent the winter in Boston, madam?"

Cecil bent her head in silent assent.

"The royal army will, doubtless, make a better figure in the eyes of a lady, than the troops of the colonies; though there are some among us who are thought not wholly wanting in military knowledge, and the certain air of a soldier," he continued; extricating the silver-headed legacy of his grandfather from its concealment under a fold of his companion's mantle—"you have balls and entertainments without number, I fancy, ma'am, from the gentlemen in the king's service."

"I believe that few hearts are to be found amongst the females in Boston, so light as to mingle in their amusements!"

"God bless them for it!" exclaimed her escort; "I am sure every shot we throw into the town is like drawing blood from our own veins. I suppose the king's officers don't hold the colonists so cheap, since the small affair on Charlestown Neck, as they did formerly?"

"None who had any interest at stake, in the events of that fatal day, will easily forget the impression it has made!"

The young American was too much struck by the melan-

choly pathos in the voice of Cecil, not to fancy he had, in his own honest triumph, unwittingly probed a wound which time had not yet healed. They rode many minutes, after this unsuccessful effort on his part to converse, in profound silence; nor did he again speak until the trampling of horses' hoofs was borne along by the evening air, unaccompanied by the lumbering sounds of wheels. At the next turn of the road they met a small cavalcade of officers, riding at a rapid rate in the direction of the place they had so recently quitted. The leader of this party drew up when he saw the wagon, which was also stopped in deference to his obvious wish to speak with them.

There was something in the haughty, and yet easy air of the gentleman who addressed her companion, that induced Cecil to attend to his remarks with more than the interest that is usually excited by the commonplace dialogues of the road. His dress was neither civil, nor wholly military, though his bearing had much of a soldier's manner. As he drew up, three or four dogs fawned upon him, or passed with indulged impunity between the legs of his high-blooded charger, apparently indifferent to the impatient repulses that were freely bestowed on their troublesome familiarities.

"High discipline, by ——!" exclaimed this singular specimen of the colonial chieftains.—"I dare presume, gentlemen, you are from the heights of Dorchester; and having walked the whole distance thither from camp, are disposed to try the virtues of a four-wheeled conveyance over the same ground, in a retreat!"

The young man rose in his place, and lifted his hat, with marked respect, as he answered—

"We are returning from the hills, sir, it is true; but we must see our enemy before we retreat!"

"A white cockade! As you hold such rank, sir, I presume you have authority for your movements?—Down, Juno—down, slut."

"This lady was landed an hour since on the Point, from the town, by a boat from a king's ship, sir; and I am ordered to see her in safety to the general of the right wing."

"A lady!" repeated the other, with singular emphasis, slowly passing his hand over his remarkably aquiline and prominent features, "if there be a lady in the case, ease must be indulged. Will you down, Juno!" Turning his head a little aside, to his nearest aid, he added, in a voice that was suppressed only by the action—"Some trull of

Howe's sent out as the newest specimen of loyal modesty! In such a case, sir, you are quite right to use horses.—I only marvel that you did not take six instead of two. But how come we on in the trenches?—Down, you hussy, down! Thou shouldst go to court, Juno, and fawn upon his majesty's ministers, where thy sycophancy might purchase thee a riband! How come we on in the trenches?"

"We have broken ground, sir, and as the eyes of the royal troops are drawn upon the batteries, we shall make a work of it before the day shows them our occupation."

"Ah! we are certainly good at digging, if at no other part of our exercises! Miss Juno, thou puttest thy precious life in jeopardy!—you will? then take thy fate!" As he spoke, the impatient chief drew a pistol from his holster, and snapped it twice at the head of the dog, that still fawned upon him in unwitting fondness. Angry with himself, his weapon, and the animal at the same moment, he turned to his attendants, and added, with bitter deliberation—"Gentlemen, if one of you will exterminate that quadruped, I promise him an honorable place in my first despatches to Congress, for the service!"

A groom in attendance whistled to the spaniel, and probably saved the life of the disgraced favorite.

The officer now addressed himself to the party he had detained, with a collected and dignified air, that showed he had recovered his self-possession, by saying—

"I beg pardon, sir, for this trouble—let me not prevent you from proceeding; there may be serious work on the heights before morning, and you will doubtless wish to be there."—He bowed with perfect ease and politeness, and the two parties were slowly passing each other, when, as if repenting of his condescension, he turned himself in his saddle, adding, with those sarcastic tones so peculiarly his own—"Captain, I beseech thee have an especial care of *the lady!*"

With these words in his mouth, he clapped spurs to his horse, and galloped onward, followed by all his train, at the same impetuous rate.

Cecil had heard each syllable that fell from the lips of both in this short dialogue, and she felt a chill of disappointment gathering about her heart, as it proceeded. When they had parted, drawing a long, tremulous breath, she asked, in tones that betrayed all her feelings—

"And is this Washington?"

"*That!*" exclaimed her companion—"No, no, madam, he

is a very different sort of man ! That is the great English officer, whom congress has made a general in our army. He is thought to be as great in the field, as he is uncouth in the drawing room—yes, I will acknowledge that much in his favor, though I never know how to understand him ; he is proud—so supercilious—and yet, he is a great friend of liberty !”

Cecil permitted the officer to reconcile the seeming contradictions in the character of his superior, in his own way, feeling perfectly relieved, when she understood it was not the man who could have any influence on her own destiny. The driver now appeared anxious to recover the lost time, and he urged his horses over the ground with increased rapidity. The remainder of their short drive to the vicinity of Roxbury, passed in silence. As the cannonading was still maintained with equal warmth by both parties, it was hazarding too much to place themselves in the line of the enemy's fire. The young man, therefore, after finding a secure spot among the uneven ground of the vicinity, where he might leave his charge in safety, proceeded by himself to the point where he had reason to believe he should find the officer he was ordered to seek. During his short absence, Cecil remained in the wagon, an appalled listener, and a partial spectator of the neighboring contest.

The Americans had burst their only mortar of size, the preceding night ; but they applied their cannon with unwearied diligence, not only in the face of the British entrenchments, but on the low land, across the estuary of the Charles ; and still farther to the north, in front of the position which their enemies held on the well-known heights of Charlestown. In retaliation for this attack, the batteries along the western side of the town were in a constant blaze of fire, while those of the eastern continued to slumber, in total unconsciousness of the coming danger.

When the officer returned, he reported that his search had been successful, and that he had been commanded to conduct his charge into the presence of the American commander-in-chief. This new arrangement imposed the necessity of driving a few miles farther ; and as the youth began to regard his new duty with some impatience, he was in no humor for delay. The route was circuitous and safe ; the roads good ; and the driver diligent. In consequence, within the hour they passed the river, and Cecil

found herself, after so long an absence, once more approaching the ancient provincial seat of learning.

The little village, though in the hands of friends, exhibited the infallible evidences of the presence of an irregular army. The buildings of the University were filled with troops, and the doors of the different inns were thronged with noisy soldiers, who were assembled for the inseparable purposes of revelry and folly. The officer drove to one of the most private of these haunts of the unthinking and idle, and declared his intentions to deposit his charge under its roof, until he could learn the pleasure of the American leader. Cecil heard his arrangements with little satisfaction ; but, yielding to the necessity of the case, when the vehicle had stopped, she alighted, without remonstrance. With her two attendants in her train, and preceded by the officer, she passed through the noisy crowd, not only without insult, but without molestation. The different declaimers in the throng, and there were many, even lowered their clamorous voices as she approached, the men giving way, in deference for her sex ; and she entered the building without hearing but one remark applied to herself, though a low and curious buzz of voices followed her footsteps to its very threshold. That solitary remark was a sudden exclamation, in admiration of the grace of her movements ; and, singular as it may seem, her companion thought it necessary to apologize for its rudeness, by whispering that it proceeded from the lips of "one of the southern riflemen ; a corps as distinguished for its skill and bravery, as for its want of breeding !"

The inside of this inn presented a very different aspect from its exterior. The decent tradesman who kept it had so far yielded to the emergency of the times, and perhaps, also, to a certain propensity towards gain, as temporarily to adopt the profession he followed ; but by a sort of implied compact with the crowd without, while he administered to their appetite for liquor, he preserved most of the privacy of his domestic arrangements. He had, however, been compelled to relinquish one apartment entirely to the service of the public, into which Cecil and her companions were shown, as a matter of course, without the smallest apology for its condition.

There might have been a dozen people in the common room ; some of whom were quietly seated before its large fire, among whom were one or two females ; some walk-

ing, and others distributed on chairs, as accident or inclination had placed them. A slight movement was made at the entrance of Cecil, but it soon subsided; though her rich mantle of fine cloth, and silken calash, did not fail to draw the eyes of the women upon her, with a ruder gaze than she had yet encountered from the other sex during the hazardous adventures of the night. She took an offered seat near the bright and cheerful blaze on the hearth, which imparted all the light the room contained, and disposed herself to wait in patience the return of her conductor, who immediately took his departure for the neighboring quarters of the American chief.

"'Tis an awful time for women bodies to journey in!" said a middle-aged woman near her, who was busily engaged in knitting, though she also bore the marks of a traveller in her dress—"I'm sure if I had thought there'd ha' been such contentions, I would never have crossed the Connecticut; though I have an only child in camp!"

"To a mother, the distress must be great, indeed," said Cecil, "when she hears the report of a contest in which she knows her children are engaged."

"Yes, Royal is engaged as a six-months'-man, and he is partly agreed to stay till the king's troops conclude to give up the town."

"It seems to me," said a grave-looking yeoman, who occupied the opposite corner of the fireplace, "your child has an unfitting name for one who fights against the crown!"

"Ah, he was so called before the king wore his Scottish Boot! and what has once been solemnly named, in holy baptism, is not to be changed with the shift of the times! They were twins, and I called one Prince and the other Royal; for they were born the day his present majesty came to man's estate. That, you know, was before his heart had changed, and when the people of the Bay loved him little less than they did their own flesh and blood."

"Why, Goody," said the yeoman, smiling good-humoredly, and rising to offer her a pinch of his real Scotch, in token of amity, while he made so free with her domestic matters—"you had then an heir to the throne in your own family! The Prince Royal, they say, comes next to the king; and by your tell, one of them, at least, is a worthy fellow, who is not likely to sell his heritage for a mess of pottage! If I understand you, Royal is here in service?"

"He's at this blessed moment in one of the battering-

rams in front of Boston Neck," returned the woman; "and the Lord, he knows, 'tis an awful calling, to be beating down the houses of people of the same religion and blood with ourselves! but so it must be, to prevail over the wicked designs of such as would live in pomp and idleness, by the sweat and labor of their fellow-creatures."

The honest yeoman, who was somewhat more familiar with the terms of modern warfare than the woman, smiled at her mistake, while he pursued the conversation with a peculiar gravity, which rendered his humor doubly droll.

"'Tis to be hoped the boy will not weary at the weapon before the morning cometh. But why does Prince linger behind, in such a moment? Tarries he with his father, on the homestead, in safety, being the younger born?"

"No, no," said the woman, shaking her head, in sorrow, "he dwells, I trust, with our common Father, in heaven! Neither are you right in calling him the home-child. He was my first-born, and a comely youth he grew to be! When the cry that the reg'lars were out at Lexington, to kill and destroy, passed through the country, he shouldered his musket, and came down with the people, to know the reason the land was stained with American blood. He was young, and full of ambition to be foremost among them who were willing to fight for their birthrights; and the last I ever heard of him was in the midst of the king's troops on Breed's. No, no; his body never came off the hill! The neighbors sent me up the clothes he left in camp, and 'tis one of his socks that I'm now footing for his twin-brother."

The woman delivered this simple explanation with perfect calmness; though, as she advanced in the subject, large tears started from her eyes, and, following each other down her cheeks, fell unheeded upon the humble garment of her dead son.

"This is the way our bravest striplings are cut off, fighting with the scum of Europe!" exclaimed the yeoman, with a warmth that showed how powerfully his feelings were touched—"I hope the boy who lives may find occasion to revenge his brother's death."

"God forbid! God forbid!" exclaimed the weeping mother—"revenge is an evil passion; and least of all would I wish a child of mine to go into the field of blood with so foul a breast. God has given us this land to dwell in, and to rear up temples and worshippers of his holy name; and in giving it, he bestowed the right to defend it against all

earthly oppression. If 'twas right for Prince to come, 'twas right for Royal to follow!"

"I believe I am reproved in justice," returned the man, looking around at the spectators with an eye that no longer teemed with a hidden meaning—"God bless you, my good woman, and deliver you, with your remaining boy, and all of us, from the scourge which has been inflicted on the country for our sins. I go west, into the mountains, with the sun; and if I can carry any word of comfort from you to the good man at home, it will not be a hill or two that shall hinder it."

"The same thanks to you for the offer, as if you did it, friend; my man would be right glad to see you at his settlement; but I sicken already with the noises and awful sights of warfare, and shall not tarry long after my son comes forth from the battle. I shall go down to Cragie's-house in the morning, and look upon the blessed man whom the people have chosen from among themselves as a leader, and hurry back again; for I plainly see that this is not an abiding place for such as I!"

"You will then have to follow him into the line of danger; for I saw him, within the hour, riding, with all his followers, toward the water-side; and I doubt not that this unusual waste of ammunition is intended for more than we of little wit can guess."

"Of whom speak you?" Cecil involuntarily asked.

"Of whom should he speak, but of Washington?" returned a deep, low voice at her elbow, whose remarkable sounds instantly recalled the tones of the aged messenger of death, who had appeared at the bed-side of her grandmother. Cecil started from her chair, and recoiled several paces from the person of Ralph, who stood regarding her with a steady and searching look, heedless of the observation they attracted, as well as of the number and quality of the spectators.

"We are not strangers, young lady," continued the old man; "and you will excuse me, if I add, that the face of an acquaintance must be grateful to one of your gentle sex, in a place so unsettled and disorderly as this."

"An acquaintance!" repeated the unprotected bride.

"I said an acquaintance; we know each other, surely," returned Ralph, with marked emphasis; "you will believe me when I add, that I have seen the two men in the guard-room, which is at hand."

Cecil cast a furtive glance behind her, and, with some

alarm, perceived that she was separated from Meriton and the stranger. Before time was allowed for recollection, the old man approached her with a courtly breeding, that was rendered more striking by the coarseness as well as negligence of his attire.

"This is not a place for the niece of an English peer," he said; "but I have long been at home in this warlike village, and will conduct you to another residence, more suited to your sex and condition."

For an instant Cecil hesitated; but observing the wondering faces about her, and the intense curiosity with which all in the room suspended their several pursuits, to listen to each syllable, she timidly accepted his offered hand, suffering him to lead her, not only from the room, but the house, in profound silence. The door through which they left the building was opposite to that by which she had entered; and when they found themselves in the open air, it was in a different street, and a short distance removed from the crowd of revellers already mentioned.

"I have left two attendants behind me," she said, "without whom 'tis impossible to proceed."

"As they are watched by armed men, you have no choice but to share their confinement, or to submit to the temporary separation," returned the other, calmly. "Should his keepers discover the character of him who led you hither, his fate would be certain!"

"His character!" repeated Cecil, again shrinking from the touch of the old man.

"Surely my words are plain! I said his character. Is he not the deadly, obstinate enemy of liberty? And think you these countrymen of ours so dull as to suffer one like him to go at large in their very camp!—No, no," he muttered with a low, but exulting laugh; "like a fool has he tempted his fate, and like a dog shall he meet it! Let us proceed; the house is but a step from this, and you may summon him to your presence if you will."

Cecil was rather impelled by her companion, than induced to proceed, when, as he had said, they soon stopped before the door of an humble and retired building. An armed man paced along its front, while the lengthened shadow of another sentinel in the rear was every half-minute thrown far into the street, in confirmation of the watchfulness that was kept over those who dwelt within.

"Proceed," said Ralph, throwing open the outer door, without hesitation. Cecil complied, but started at en-

countering another man, trailing a musket, as he paced to and fro in the narrow passage that received her. Between this sentinel and Ralph, there seemed to exist a good understanding, for the latter addressed him with perfect freedom—

“Has no order been yet received from Washington?” he asked.

“None; and I rather conclude, by the delay, that nothing very favorable is to be expected.”

The old man muttered to himself, but passed on, and, throwing open another door, said—

“Enter.”

Again Cecil complied, the door closing on her at the instant; but before she had time to express either her wonder or her alarm, she was folded in the arms of her husband.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“Is she a Capulet?”

O dear account! my life is my foe’s debt.”—*Romeo.*

“AH! Lincoln! Lincoln!” cried the weeping bride, gently extricating herself from the long embrace of Lionel, “at what a moment did you desert me!”

“And how have I been punished, love! a night of frenzy, and a morrow of useless regrets! How early have I been made to feel the strength of those ties which unite us;—unless, indeed, my own folly may have already severed them forever!”

“Truant! I know you! and shall hereafter weave a web, with woman’s art, to keep you in my toils! If you love me, Lionel, as I would fain believe, let all the past be forgotten. I ask—I wish, no explanation. You have been deceived, and that repentant eye assures me of your returning reason. Let us now speak only of yourself. Why do I find you thus guarded, more like a criminal than an officer of the crown?”

“They have, indeed, bestowed especial watchfulness on my safety!”

“How came you in their power? and why do they abuse their advantage?”

“’Tis easily explained. Presuming on the tempestuousness of the night—what a bridal was ours, Cecil!”

"'Twas terrible!" she answered, shuddering; then, with a bright and instant smile, as if sedulous to chase every appearance of distrust or care from her countenance, she continued—"but I have no longer faith in omens, Lincoln! or, if one has been given, is not the awful fulfilment already come? I know not how you value the benedictions of a parting soul, Lionel, but to me there is holy consolation in knowing that my dying parent left her blessing on our sudden union!"

Disregarding the hand, which, with gentle earnestness, she had laid upon his shoulder, he walked gloomily away, into a distant corner of the apartment.

"Cecil, I do love you, as you would fain believe," he said, "and I listen readily to your wish to bury the past in oblivion.—But I leave my tale unfinished. You know the night was such that none would choose, uselessly, to brave its fury—I attempted to profit by the storm, and availing myself of a flag, which is regularly granted to the simpleton, Job Pray, I left the town. Impatient—do I say impatient?—borne along rather by a tempest of passions that mocked the feebler elements, we ventured too much—Cecil, I was not alone!"

"I know it—I know it," she said, hurriedly, though speaking barely above her breath—"you ventured too much—"

"And encountered a piquet that would not mistake a royal officer for an impoverished, though privileged idiot. In our anxiety we overlooked—believe me, dearest Cecil, that if you knew all—the scene I had witnessed—the motives which urged—they, at least would justify this strange and seeming desertion."

"Did I doubt it, would I forget my condition, my recent loss, and my sex, to follow in the footsteps of one unworthy of my solicitude!" returned the bride, coloring as much with innate modesty, as with the power of her emotions. "Think not I come with girlish weakness, to reproach you with any fancied wrongs! I am your wife, Major Lincoln; and as such would I serve you, at a moment when I know all the tenderness of the tie will most be needed. At the altar, and in the presence of my God, have I acknowledged the sacred duty; and shall I hesitate to discharge it because the eyes of man are on me!"

"I shall go mad!—I shall go mad!" cried Lionel, in ungovernable mental anguish, as he paced the floor, in violent disorder.—"There are moments when I think that

the curse, which destroyed the father, has already lighted on the son !”

“Lionel !” said the soft, soothing voice of his companion, at his elbow, “is this to render me more happy ?—the welcome you bestow on the confiding girl, who has committed her happiness to your keeping ? I see you relent, and will be more just to us both ; more dutiful to your God ! Now let us speak of your confinement. Surely, you are not suspected of any criminal designs in this rash visit to the camp of the Americans ! ’Twere easy to convince their leaders that you are innocent of so base a purpose !”

“’Tis difficult to evade the vigilance of those who struggle for liberty !” returned the low, calm voice of Ralph, who stood before them, unexpectedly. “Major Lincoln has too long listened to the councils of tyrants and slaves, and forgotten the land of his birth. If he would be safe, let him retract the error, while yet he may, with honor.”

“Honor !” repeated Lionel, with unconcealed disdain—again pacing the room with swift and uneasy steps, without deigning any other notice of the unwelcome intruder. Cecil bowed her head, and, sinking in a chair, concealed her face in her small muff, as if to exclude some horrid and fearful sight from her view.

The momentary silence was broken by the sound of footsteps and of voices in the passage, and at the next instant, the door of the room opening, Meriton was seen on its threshold. His appearance roused Cecil, who, springing on her feet, beckoned him away, with a sort of frenzied earnestness, exclaiming—

“Not here ! not here !—for the love of heaven, not here !”

The valet hesitated, but, catching a glimpse of his master, his attachment got the ascendancy of his respect—

“God be praised for this blessed sight, Master Lionel !” he cried—“’tis the happiest hour I have seen since I lost the look at the shores of old England ! If ’twas only at Ravenscliffe, or in Soho, I should be the most contented fool in the three kingdoms ! Ah, Master Lionel, let us get out of this province, into the country, where there is no rebels ; or anything worse than King, Lords, and Commons !”

“Enough now ; for this time, worthy Meriton, enough !” interrupted Cecil, breathing with difficulty, in her eagerness to be heard.—“Go—return to the inn—the colleges—anywhere—do but go !”

"Don't send a loyal subject, ma'am, again among the rebels, I desire to entreat of you. Such awful blasphemies, sir, as I heard while I was there! They spoke of his sacred majesty just as freely, sir, as if he had been a gentleman like yourself. Joyful was the news of my release!"

"And had it been a guard-room on the opposite shore," said Ralph, "the liberties they used with your earthly monarch would have been as freely taken with the King of kings!"

"You shall remain, then," said Cecil, probably mistaking the look of high disdain which Meriton bestowed on his aged fellow-voyager, for one of a very different meaning—"but not here. You have other apartments, Major Lincoln; let my attendants be received there—you surely would not admit the menials to our interview!"

"Why this sudden terror, love? Here, if not happy, you at least are safe. Go, Meriton, into the adjoining room; if wanted, there is admission through this door of communication."

The valet murmured some half-uttered sentences, of which only the emphatic word "genteel" was audible; while the direction of his discontented eye sufficiently betrayed that Ralph was the subject of his meditations. The old man followed his footsteps, and the door of the passage soon closed on both, leaving Cecil standing, like a beautiful statue, in an attitude of absorbed thought. When the noise of her attendants, as they quietly entered the adjoining room, was heard, she breathed again, with a tremulous sigh, that seemed to raise a weight of apprehension from her heart.

"Fear not for me, Cecil, and least of all for yourself," said Lionel, drawing her to his bosom with fond solicitude—"my headlong rashness, or rather that fatal bane to the happiness of my house, the distempered feeling which you must have often seen and deplored, has indeed led me into a seeming danger. But I have a reason for my conduct, which, avowed, shall lull the suspicions of even our enemies to sleep."

"I have no suspicions—no knowledge of any imperfections—no regrets, Lionel;—nothing but the most ardent wishes for your peace of mind; and, if I might explain!—yes, now is a time—Lionel, kind, but truant Lionel——"

Her words were interrupted by Ralph, who appeared again in the room, with that noiseless step, which, in con-

junction with his great age and attenuated frame, sometimes gave to his movements and aspect the character of a being superior to the attributes of humanity. On his arm he bore an overcoat and a hat, both of which Cecil recognized, at a glance, as the property of the unknown man who had attended her person throughout all the vicissitudes of that eventful night.

"See!" said Ralph, exhibiting his spoils with a ghastly, but meaning smile, "see in how many forms Liberty appears to aid her votaries! Here is the guise in which she will now be courted! Wear them, young man, and be free!"

"Believe him not—listen not," whispered Cecil, while she shrunk from his approach in undisguised terror—"nay, do listen, but act with caution!"

"Dost thou delay to receive the blessed boon of freedom, when offered?" demanded Ralph; "wouldst thou remain, and brave the angry justice of the American chief, and make thy wife, of a day, a widow for an age?"

"In what manner am I to profit by this dress?" said Lionel.—"To submit to the degradation of a disguise, success should be certain."

"Turn thy haughty eyes, young man, on the picture of innocence and terror at thy side. For the sake of her whose fate is wrapped in thine, if not for your own, consult thy safety, and fly—another minute may be too late."

"Oh! hesitate not a moment longer, Lincoln," cried Cecil, with a change of purpose as sudden as the impulse was powerful—"fly,—leave me; my sex and station will be——"

"Never," said Lionel, casting the garment from him, in cool disdain.—"Once, when Death was busy, did I abandon thee; but, ere I do it again, his blow must fall on me!"

"I will follow—I will rejoin you."

"You shall not part," said Ralph, once more raising the rejected coat, and lending his aid to envelop the form of Lionel, who stood passive under the united efforts of his bride and her aged assistant. "Remain here," the latter added, when their brief task was ended, "and await the summons to freedom. And thou, sweet flower of innocence and love, follow, and share in the honor of liberating him who has enslaved thee!"

Cecil blushed with virgin shame, at the strength of his

expressions, but bowed her head in silent acquiescence to his will. Proceeding to the door, he beckoned her to approach, indicating, by an expressive gesture to Lionel, that he was to remain stationary. When Cecil had complied, and they were in the narrow passage of the building, Ralph, instead of betraying any apprehension of the sentinel who paced its length, fearlessly approached, and addressed him with the confidence of a known friend—

"See!" he said, removing the calash from before the pale features of his companion, "how terror for the fate of her husband has caused the good child to weep! She quits him now, friend, with one of her attendants, while the other tarries to administer to his master's wants. Look at her; is't not a sweet, though mourning partner, to smooth the path of a soldier's life!"

The man seemed awkwardly sensible of the unusual charms that Ralph so unceremoniously exhibited to his view; and while he stood in admiring embarrassment, ashamed to gaze, and yet unwilling to retire, Cecil traced the light footsteps of the old man, entering the room occupied by Meriton and the stranger. She was still in the act of veiling her features from the eyes of the sentinel, when Ralph reappeared, attended by a figure muffled in the well-known overcoat. Notwithstanding the flopped hat, and studied concealment of his gait, the keen eyes of the wife penetrated the disguise of her husband; and recollecting, at the same instant, the door of communication between the two apartments, the whole artifice was at once revealed. With trembling eagerness she glided past the sentinel, and pressed to the side of Lionel, with a dependence that might have betrayed the deception to one more accustomed to the forms of life than was the honest countryman who had so recently thrown aside the flail to carry a musket.

Ralph allowed the sentinel no time to deliberate; but waving his hand in token of adieu, he led the way into the street, with his accustomed activity. Here they found themselves in the presence of the other soldier, who moved to and fro, along the allotted ground in front of the building, rendering the watchfulness, by which they were environed, doubly embarrassing. Following the example of their aged conductor, Lionel and his trembling companion walked with apparent indifference towards this man, who, as it proved, was better deserving of his trust than his fellow within doors. Dropping his musket across their path,

in a manner which announced an intention to inquire into their movements, before he suffered them to proceed, he roughly demanded—

“How’s this, old gentleman? you come out of the prisoners’ rooms by squads! one, two, three; our English gallant might be among you, and there would still be two left! Come, come, old father, render some account of yourself, and of your command. For, to be plain with you, there are those who think you are no better than a spy of Howe’s, notwithstanding you are left to run up and down the camp, as you please. In plain Yankee dialect, and that’s intelligible English, you have been caught in bad company of late, and there has been hard talk about shutting you up, as well as your comrade!”

“Hear ye that?” said Ralph, calmly smiling, and addressing himself to his companions, instead of the man whose interrogatories he was expected to answer—“think you the hirelings of the crown are thus alert? Would not the slaves be sleeping the moment the eyes of their tyrants are turned on their own lawless pleasures? Thus it is with Liberty! The sacred spirit hallows its meanest votaries, and elevates the private to all the virtues of the proudest captain!”

“Come, come,” returned the flattered sentinel, throwing his musket back to his shoulder again, “I believe a man gains nothing by battling you with words! I should have spent a year or two inside yonder colleges to dive at all your meaning. Though I can guess you are more than half right in one thing; for if a poor fellow, who loves his country, and the good cause, finds it so hard to keep his eyes open on post, what must it be to a half-starved devil on sixpence a-day! Go along, go along, old father; there is one less of you than went in, and if there was anything wrong, the man in the house should know it!”

As he concluded, the sentinel continued his walk, humming a verse of Yankee-doodle, in excellent favor with himself and all mankind, with the sweeping exception of his country’s enemies. To say that this was not the first instance of well-meaning integrity being cajoled by the jargon of liberty, might be an assertion too hazardous; but that it has not been the last, we conscientiously believe, though no immediate example may present itself to quote in support of such heretical credulity.

Ralph appeared, however, perfectly innocent of intending to utter more than the spirit of the times justified;

for, when left to his own pleasure, he pursued his way, muttering rapidly to himself, and with an earnestness that attested his sincerity. When they had turned a corner, at a little distance from any pressing danger, he relaxed in his movements, and, suffering his eager companions to approach, he stole to the side of Lionel, and, clenching his hand fiercely, he whispered, in a voice half choked by inward exultation—

“I have him now ; he is no longer dangerous ! Ay—ay—I have him closely watched by the vigilance of three incorruptible patriots !”

“Of whom speak you ?” demanded Lionel—“what is his offence, and where is your captive ?”

“A dog ! a man in form, but a tiger in heart ! Ay ! but I have him !” the old man continued, with a hollow laugh, that seemed to heave up from his inmost soul—“a dog ; a veritable dog ! I have him, and God grant that he may drink of the cup of slavery to its dregs !”

“Old man,” said Lionel, firmly, “that I have followed you thus far on no unworthy errand, you best may testify—I have forgotten the oath which, at the altar, I had sworn to, to cherish this sweet and spotless being at my side, at your instigation, aided by the maddening circumstances of a moment ; but the delusion has already passed away ! Here we part forever, unless your solemn and often-repeated promises are, on the instant, redeemed.”

The high exultation, which had so lately rendered the emaciated countenance of Ralph hideously ghastly, disappeared like a passing shadow ; and he listened to the words of Lionel with calm and settled attention. But when he would have answered, he was interrupted by Cecil, who uttered, in a voice nearly suppressed by her fears—

“Oh ! delay not a moment ! Let us proceed anywhere, or anyhow ! even now the pursuers may be on our track. I am strong, dearest Lionel, and will follow to the ends of the earth, so you but lead !”

“Lionel Lincoln, I have not deceived thee !” said the old man, solemnly. “Providence has already led us on our way, and a few minutes will bring us to our goal—suffer, then, that gentle trembler to return into the village, and follow !”

“Not an inch !” returned Lionel, pressing Cecil still closer to his side—“here we part, or your promises are fulfilled.”

“Nay, go with him—go,” again whispered the being who

clung to him in trembling dependence. "This very controversy may prove your ruin—did I not say I would accompany you, Lincoln?"

"Lead on, then," said her husband, motioning Ralph to proceed—"once again will I confide in you; but use the trust with discretion, for my guardian spirit is at hand; and remember, thou no longer ledest a lunatic!"

The moon fell upon the wan features of the old man, and exhibited their contented smile, as he silently turned away, and resumed his progress with his wonted rapid and noiseless tread. Their route still lay towards the skirts of the village. While the buildings of the University were yet in the near view, and the loud laugh of the idlers about the inn, with the frequent challenges of the sentinels, were still distinctly audible, their conductor bent his way beneath the walls of a church, that rose in solemn solitude in the deceptive light of the evening. Pointing upward at its somewhat unusual, because regular architecture, Ralph muttered, as he passed—

"Here, at least, God possesses his own, without insult!"

Lionel and Cecil slightly glanced their eyes at the silent walls, and followed into a small enclosure, through a gap in its humble and dilapidated fence. Here the former again paused and spoke—

"I will go no further," he said, unconsciously strengthening the declaration by placing his foot firmly on the frozen earth, in an attitude of resistance—" 'tis time to cease thinking of self, and to listen to the weakness of her whom I support!"

"Think not of me, dearest Lincoln——"

Cecil was interrupted by the voice of the old man, who, raising his hat, and baring his gray locks to the mild rays of the planet, answered with tremulous emotion—

"Thy task is already ended! Thou hast reached the spot, where moulder the bones of one who long supported thee. Unthinking boy, that sacrilegious foot treads on thy mother's grave!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

“ Oh, age has weary days,
And nights o’ sleepless pain !
Thou golden time o’ youthful prime,
Why com’st thou not again ? ”—BURNS.

THE stillness that succeeded this unexpected annunciation was like the cold silence of those who slumbered on every side of them. Lionel recoiled a pace, in horror ; then, imitating the action of the old man, he uncovered his head, in pious reverence of the parent, whose form floated dimly in his imagination, like the earliest recollections of infancy, or the imperfect fancies of some dream. When time was given for these sudden emotions to subside, he turned to Ralph, and said—

“ And was it here that you would bring me, to listen to the sorrows of my family ? ”

An expression of piteous anguish crossed the features of the other, as he answered, in a voice which was subdued to softness—

“ Even here—here in the presence of thy mother’s grave, shalt thou hear the tale ! ”

“ Then let it be here ! ” said Lionel, whose eye was already kindling with a wild and disordered meaning, that curdled the blood of the anxious Cecil, who watched its expression with a woman’s solicitude.—“ Here, on this hallowed spot, will I listen, and swear the vengeance that is due, if all thy previous intimations should be just——”

“ No, no, no—listen not—tarry not ! ” said Cecil, clinging to his side in undisguised alarm—“ Lincoln, you are not equal to the scene ! ”

“ I am equal to anything, in such a cause.”

“ Nay, Lionel, you overrate your powers !—Think only of your safety, now ; at another, and happier moment you shall know all—yes—I—Cecil—thy bride, thy wife, promise that all shall be revealed——”

“ Thou ! ”

“ It is the descendant of the widow of John Lechmere who speaks, and thy ears will not refuse the sounds,” said Ralph, with a smile that acted like a taunt on the awakened impulses of the young man.—“ Go—thou art fitter for a bridal than a church-yard ! ”

"I have told you that I am equal to anything," sternly answered Lionel; "here will I sit, on this humble tablet, to hear all that you can utter, though the rebel legions encircle me to my death!"

"What! dar'st brave the averted eye of one so dear to thy heart?"

"All, or anything," exclaimed the excited youth, "with so pious an object."

"Bravely answered! and thy reward is nigh—nay, look not on the siren, or thou wilt relent."

"My wife!" said Lionel, extending his hand, kindly, towards the shrinking form of Cecil.

"Thy mother!" interrupted Ralph, pointing with his emaciated hand to the cold residence of the dead.

Lionel sunk on the dilapidated gravestone to which he had just alluded, and gathering his coat about him, he rested an arm upon his knee, while its hand supported his quivering chin, as if he were desperately bent on his gloomy purpose. The old man smiled with his usual ghastly expression, as he witnessed this proof of his success, and he took a similar seat on the opposite side of the grave, which seemed the focus of their common interest. Here he dropped his face between his hands, and appeared to muse, like one who was collecting his thoughts for the coming emergency. During this short and impressive pause, Lionel felt the trembling form of Cecil drawing to his side; and before his aged companion spoke, her unveiled and pallid countenance was once more watching the changes of his own features, in submissive, but anxious attention.

"Thou knowest already, Lionel Lincoln," commenced Ralph, slowly raising his body to an upright attitude, "how, in past ages, thy family sought these colonies, to find religious quiet, and the peace of the just. And thou also knowest,—for often did we beguile the long watches of the night in discoursing of these things, while the never-tiring ocean was rolling its waters unheeded around,—how Death came into its elder branch, which still dwelt amid the luxury and corruption of the English court, and left thy father the heir of all its riches and honors."

"How much of this is unknown to the meanest gossip in the province of Massachusetts Bay?" interrupted the impatient Lionel.

"But they do not know, that, for years before this accumulation of fortune actually occurred. it was deemed to

be inevitable by the decrees of Providence ; they do not know how much more value the orphan son of the unprovided soldier found in the eyes of those even of his own blood, by the expectation ; nor do they know how the worldly-minded Priscilla Lechmere, thy father's aunt, would have compassed heaven and earth, to have seen that wealth, and those honors, to which it was her greatest boast to claim alliance, descend in the line of her own body."

"But 'twas impossible ! She was of the female branch ; neither had she a son !"

"Nothing seems impossible to those on whose peace of mind the worm of ambition feeds—thou knowest well she left a grandchild ; had not that child a mother ?"

Lionel felt a painful conviction of the connection, as the trembling object of these remarks sunk her head in shame and sorrow on his bosom, keenly alive to the justice of the character drawn of her deceased relative, by the mysterious being who had just spoken.

"God forbid, that I, a Christian, and a gentleman," continued the old man, a little proudly, "should utter a syllable to taint the spotless name of one so free from blemish as she of whom I speak. The sweet child who clings to thee, in dread, Lionel, was not more pure and innocent than she who bore her. And long before ambition had wove its toils for the miserable Priscilla, the heart of her daughter was the property of the gallant and honorable Englishman, to whom in later years she was wedded."

As Cecil heard this soothing commendation of her more immediate parents, she again raised her face into the light of the moon, and remained, where she was already kneeling, at the side of Lionel, no longer an uneasy, but a deeply interested listener to what followed.

"As the wishes of my unhappy aunt were not realized," said Major Lincoln, "in what manner could they affect the fortunes of my father ?"

"Thou shalt hear. In the same dwelling lived another, even fairer, and, to the eye, as pure as the daughter of Priscilla. She was the relative, the god-child, and the ward of that miserable woman. The beauty, and seeming virtues of this apparent angel in human form, caught the young eye of thy father, and, in defiance of arts and schemes, before the long-expected title and fortune came, they were wedded, and thou wert born, Lionel, to render the boon of Fate doubly welcome."

"And then——"

"And then thy father hastened to the land of his ancestors, to claim his own, and to prepare the way for the reception of yourself, and his beloved Priscilla—for then there were two Priscillas; and now both sleep with the dead! All having life and nature can claim the quiet of the grave, but I," continued the old man, glancing his hollow eye upward, with a look of hopeless misery,—“I, who have seen ages pass since the blood of youth has been chilled, and generation after generation swept away, must still linger in the haunts of men! but 'tis to aid in the great work which commences here, but which shall not end until a continent be regenerate.”

Lionel suffered a minute to pass without a question, in deference to this burst of feeling; but soon, making an impatient movement, it drew the eyes of Ralph once more upon him, and the old man continued—

“Month after month, for two long and tedious years, did thy father linger in England, struggling for his own. At length he prevailed. He then hastened hither; but there was no wife—no fond and loving Priscilla, like that tender flower that reposes in thy bosom, to welcome his return.”

“I know it,” said Lionel, nearly choked by his pious recollections—“she was dead.”

“She was more,” returned Ralph, in a voice so deep, that it sounded like one speaking from the grave—“she was dishonored!”

“'Tis false!”

“'Tis true; true as that holy gospel which comes to men through the inspired ministers of God!”

“'Tis false,” repeated Lionel fiercely—“blackier than the darkest thoughts of the foul spirit of evil!”

“I say, rash boy, 'tis true! She died in giving birth to the fruits of her infamy. When Priscilla Lechmere met thy heart-stricken parent with the damning tale, he read in her exulting eye the treason of her mind, and, like thee, he dared to call heaven to witness, that thy mother was defamed. But there was one known to him, under circumstances that forbade the thoughts of deceit, who swore—ay, took the blessed name of Him, who reads all hearts, for warranty of her truth!—and she confirmed it.”

“The infamous seducer!” said Lionel, hoarsely, his body turning unconsciously away from Cecil—“does he yet live? Give him to my vengeance, old man, and I will yet bless you for your accursed history!”

"Lionel, Lionel," said the soothing voice of his bride, "do you credit him?"

"Credit him!" said Ralph, with a horrid, inward laugh, as if he would deride the idea of incredulity; "all this must he believe, and more! Once again, weak girl, did thy grandmother throw out her lures for the wealthy baronet, and when he would not become her son, then did she league with the spirits of hell to compass his ruin. Revenge took place of ambition, and thy husband's father was the victim!"

"Say on!" cried Lionel, nearly ceasing to breathe in the intensity of his interest.

"The blow had cut him to the heart; and, for a time, his reason was crushed beneath its weight. Yet 'twas but for an hour, compared to the eternity a man is doomed to live! They profited by the temporary derangement, and when his wandering faculties were lulled to quiet, he found himself the tenant of a mad-house, where, for twenty long years, was he herded with the defaced images of his Maker, by the arts of the base widow of John Lechmere."

"Can this be true! Can this be true!" cried Lionel, clasping his hands wildly, and springing to his feet, with a violence that cast the tender form that still clung to him, aside, like a worthless toy—"Can this be proved? How knowest thou these facts?"

The calm, but melancholy smile that was wont to light the wan features of the old man, when he alluded to his own existence, was once more visible, as he answered—

"There is but little hid from the knowledge acquired by length of days; besides, have I not secret means of intelligence that are unknown to thee? Remember what, in our frequent interviews, I have revealed; recall the death-bed scene of Priscilla Lechmere, and ask thyself if there be not truth in thy aged friend?"

"Give me all! hold not back a tittle of thy accursed tale—give me all—or take back each syllable thou hast uttered."

"Thou shalt have all thou askest, Lionel Lincoln, and more," returned Ralph, throwing into his manner and voice its utmost powers of solemnity and persuasion—"provided thou wilt swear eternal hatred to that country and those laws, by which an innocent and unoffending man can be levelled with the beasts of the field, and be made to rave even at his Maker, in the bitterness of his sufferings."

"More than that—ten thousand times more than that, will I swear—I will league with this rebellion——"

"Lionel, Lionel—what is't you do?" interrupted the heart-stricken Cecil.

But her voice was stilled by loud and busy cries, which broke out of the village, above the hum of revelry, and were instantly succeeded by the trampling of footsteps, as men rushed over the frozen ground, apparently by hundreds, and with headlong rapidity. Ralph, who was not less quick to hear these sounds than the timid bride, glided from the grave, and approached the high-way, whither he was slowly followed by his companions; Lionel utterly indifferent whither he proceeded, and Cecil trembling in every limb with terror for the safety of him, who so little regarded his own danger.

"They are abroad, and think to find an enemy," said the old man, raising his hand with a gesture to command attention; "but he has sworn to join their standards, and gladly will they receive any of his name and family!"

"No, no—he has pledged himself to no dishonor," cried Cecil.—"Fly, Lincoln, while you are free, and leave me to meet the pursuers—they will respect my weakness."

Fortunately, the allusion to herself awakened Lionel from the dull forgetfulness, into which his faculties had fallen. Encircling her slight figure with his arm, he turned swiftly from the spot, saying, as he urged her forward—

"Old man, when this precious charge is in safety, thy truth or falsehood shall be proved."

But Ralph, whose unencumbered person, and iron frame, which seemed to mock the ravages of time, gave a vast superiority over the impeded progress of the other, moved swiftly ahead, waving his hand on high, as if to indicate his intention to join in the flight, while he led the way into the fields adjacent to the church-yard they had quitted.

The noise of the pursuers soon became more distinct, and, in the intervals of the distant cannonade, the cries and directions of those who conducted the chase were distinctly audible. Notwithstanding the vigorous arm of her supporter, Cecil was soon sensible that her delicate frame was unequal to continue the exertions necessary to ensure their safety. They had entered another road, which lay at no great distance from the first, when she paused, and reluctantly declared her inability to proceed.

"Then, here will we await our captors," said Lionel, with

forced composure—"let the rebels beware how they abuse their slight advantage!"

The words were scarcely uttered, when a cart, drawn by a double team, turned an angle in the highway, near them, and its driver appeared within a few feet of the spot where they stood. He was a man far advanced in years, but still wielded his long goad with a dexterity, which had been imparted by the practice of more than half a century. The sight of this man, alone, and removed from immediate aid, suggested a desperate thought of self-preservation to Lionel. Quitting the side of his exhausted companion, he advanced upon him with an air so fierce, that it might have created alarm in one who had the smallest reason to apprehend any danger.

"Whither go you with that cart?" sternly demanded the young man, on the instant.

"To the Point," was the ready answer. "Yes, yes—old and young—big and little—men and cre'turs—four-wheels and two-wheels—everything goes to the Point to-night, as you can guess, fri'nd! Why," he continued, dropping one end of his goad on the ground, and supporting himself by grasping it with both his hands—"I was eighty-three the fourteenth of the last March, and I hope, God willing, that when the next birth-day comes, there won't be a red coat left in the town of Boston. To my notion, fri'nd, they have held the place long enough, and it's time to quit. My boys are in the camp, soldiering a turn—the old woman has been as busy as a bee, sin' sun-down, helping me to load up what you see, and I am carrying it over to Dorchester, and not a farthing shall it ever cost the congress!"

"And you are going to Dorchester Neck with your bundles of hay!" said Lionel, eying both him and his passing team, in hesitation whether to attempt violence on one so infirm and helpless.

"Anan! you must speak up, soldier-fashion, as you did at first, for I am a little deaf," returned the carter. "Yes, yes, they spared me in the press, for they said I had done enough; but I say a man has never done enough for his own country, when anything is left to be done. I'm told they are carrying over fashines, as they call 'em, and pressed-hay, for their forts.—As hay is more in my fashion than any other fashion, I've bundled up a stout pile on't here; and if that won't do, why, let Washington come; he is welcome to the barn, stacks and all!"

"While you are so liberal to the congress, can you help a female in distress, who would wish to go in the direction of your route, but is too feeble to walk?"

"With all my heart," said the other, turning round in quest of her whom he was desired to assist—"I hope she is handy; for the night wears on, and I shouldn't like to have the English send a bullet at our people on Dorchester hills, before my hay gets there to help stop it."

"She shall not detain you an instant," said Lionel, springing to the place where Cecil stood, partly concealed by the fence, and supporting her to the side of the rude vehicle—"you shall be amply rewarded for this service."

"Reward! Perhaps she is the wife or daughter of a soldier, in which case she should be drawn in her coach and four, instead of a cart and double team."

"Yes, yes—you are right, she is both—the wife of one, and the daughter of another soldier."

"Ay! God bless her! I warrant me old Put was more than half right, when he said the women would stop the two regiments, that the proud parliamenter boasted could march through the colonies, from Hampshire to Georgi'. Well, fri'nds, are ye situated?"

"Perfectly," said Lionel, who had been preparing seats for himself and Cecil among the bundles of hay, and assisting his companion into her place during the dialogue—"we will detain you no longer."

The carter, who was no less than the owner of a hundred acres of good land in the vicinity, signified his readiness; and sweeping through the air with his goad, he brought his cattle to the proper direction, and slowly moved on. During this hurried scene, Ralph had continued hid by the shadows of the fence. When the cart proceeded, he waved his hand, and gliding across the road, was soon lost to the eye in the misty distance, with which his gray apparel blended, like a spectre vanishing in air.

In the meantime the pursuers had not been idle. Voices were heard in different directions, and dim forms were to be seen rushing through the fields, by the aid of the deceptive light of the moon. To add to the embarrassment of their situation, Lionel found, when too late, that the route to Dorchester lay directly through the village of Cambridge. When he perceived they were approaching the streets, he would have left the cart, had not the experiment been too dangerous, in the midst of the disturbed soldiery, who now flew by on every side of them. In such

a strait, his safest course was to continue motionless and silent, secreting his own form and that of Cecil, as much as possible, among the bundles of hay. Contrary to all the just expectations, which the impatient patriotism of the old yeoman had excited, instead of driving steadily through the place, he turned his cattle a little from the direct route, and stopped in front of the very inn, where Cecil had so lately been conducted by her guide from the point.

Here the same noisy and thoughtless revelry existed as before. The arrival of such an equipage at once drew a crowd to the spot, and the uneasy pair on the top of the load became unwilling listeners to the conversation.

"What, old one, hard at it for congress!" cried a man, approaching with a mug in his hand; "come, wet your throat, my venerable father of Liberty, for you are too old to be a son!"

"Yes, yes," answered the exulting farmer, "I am father and son, too! I have four boys in camp, and seven grand-uns, in the bargain; and that would be eleven good triggers in one family, if five good muskets had so many locks—but the youngest men have got a ducking-gun, and a double-barrel atween them, howsomever; and Aaron, the boy, carries as good a horse-pistol, I calculate, as any there is going in the Bay! But what an uneasy time you have on't to-night! There's more powder wasted mocking thunder, than would fight old Bunker over again, at 'white o' the eye' distance!"

"'Tis the way of war, old man; and we want to keep the reg'lars from looking at Dorchester."

"If they did, they couldn't see far to-night. But, now, do tell me; I am an old man, and have a grain of cur'osity in the flesh; my woman says that Howe casts out his carcasses at you; which I hold to be an irreligious deception."

"As true as the gospel."

"Well, there is no calculating on the wastefulness of an ungodly spirit!" said the worthy yeoman, shaking his head—"I could believe any wickedness of him but that! As cre'turs must be getting scarce in the town, I conclude he makes use of his own slain!"

"Certain," answered the soldier, winking at his companions—"Breed's Hill has kept him in ammunition all winter."

"'Tis awful, awful! to see a fellow-cre'tur flying through the air, after the spirit has departed to judgment! War is

a dreadful calling ; but, then, what is a man without liberty ! ”

“ Hark ye, old gentleman, talking of flying, have you seen anything of two men and a woman, flying up the road as you came in ? ”

“ Anan ! I’m a little hard o’ hearing—women, too ! do they shoot their Jezebels into our camp ? There is no wickedness the king’s ministers won’t attempt to circumvent our weak natures ! ”

“ Did you see two men and a woman, running away as you came down the road ? ” bawled the fellow in his ear.

“ Two ! did you say two ? ” asked the yeoman, turning his head a little on one side, in an attitude of sagacious musing.

“ Yes, two men. ”

“ No, I didn’t see two. Running out of town, did you say ? ”

“ Ay, running, as if the devil was after them. ”

“ No ; I didn’t see two ; nor anybody running away—it’s a sartain sign of guilt to run away—is there any reward offered ? ” said the old man, suddenly interrupting himself, and again communing with his own thoughts.

“ Not yet—they’ve just escaped. ”

“ The surest way to catch a thief is to offer a smart reward—no—I didn’t see two men—you are sartain there was two ? ”

“ Push on with that cart ! drive on, drive on, ” cried a mounted officer of the quartermaster’s department, who came scouring through the street, at that moment, awakening all the slumbering ideas of haste, which the old farmer had suffered to lie dormant so long. Once more flourishing his goad, he put his team in motion, wishing the revellers good-night as he proceeded. It was, however, long after he left the village, and crossed the Charles, before he ceased to make frequent and sudden halts in the highway, as if doubtful whether to continue his route, or to return. At length he stopped the cart, and clambering up on the hay, he took a seat, where with one eye he could regulate his cattle, and with the other examine his companions. This investigation continued another hour, neither party uttering a syllable, when the teamster appeared satisfied that his suspicions were unjust, and abandoned them. Perhaps the difficulties of the road assisted in dissipating his doubts ; for, as they proceeded, return carts were met, at every few rods, rendering his undivided attention to his own team indispensable.

Lionel, whose gloomy thoughts had been chased from his mind by the constant excitement of the foregoing scenes, now felt relieved from any immediate apprehensions. He whispered his soothing hopes of a final escape to Cecil, and folding her in his coat, to shield her from the night air, he was pleased to find, ere long, by her gentle breathing, that, overcome by fatigue, she was slumbering in forgetfulness on his bosom.

Midnight had long passed when they came in sight of the eminences beyond Dorchester Neck. Cecil had awoke, and Lionel was already devising some plausible excuse for quitting the cart, without reviving the suspicions of the teamster. At length a favorable spot occurred, where they were alone, and the formation of the ground was adapted to such a purpose. Lionel was on the point of speaking, when the cattle stopped, and Ralph suddenly appeared in the highway, at their heads.

"Make room, fri'nd, for the oxen," said the farmer—"dumb beasts won't pass in the face of man."

"Alright," said Ralph, seconding his words with a wide sweep of his arm toward the fields.

Lionel quickly obeyed, and, by the time the driver had descended also, the whole party stood together in the road.

"You have conferred a greater obligation than you are aware of," said Lionel to the driver. "Here are five guineas."

"For what? for riding on a load of hay a few miles?—no, no—kindness is no such boughten article in the Bay, that a man need pay for it! But, fri'nd, money seems plenty with you, for these difficult days!"

"Then thanks, a thousand times—I can stay to offer you no more."

He was yet speaking, when, obedient to an impatient gesture from Ralph, he lifted Cecil over the fence, and in a moment they disappeared from the eyes of the astonished farmer.

"Halloo, fri'nd!" cried the worthy advocate for his country, running after them as fast as old age would allow—"were there three of you, when I took ye up?"

The fugitives heard the call of the simple and garrulous old man, but, as will easily be imagined, did not deem it prudent to stop and discuss the point in question between them. Before they had gone far, the furious cry of "Take care of that team!" with the rattling of wheels, announced that their pursuer was recalled to his duty, by an arriva.

of empty wagons ; and, before the distance rendered sounds unintelligible, they heard the noisy explanation, which their late companion was giving to the others, of the whole transaction. They were not, however, pursued ; the teamsters having more pressing objects in view than the detection of thieves, or even of pocketing a reward.

Ralph led his companions, after a brief explanation, by a long and circuitous path, to the shores of the bay. Here they found, hid in the rushes of a shallow inlet, a small boat, that Lionel recognized as the little vessel in which Job Pray was wont to pursue his usual avocation of a fisherman. Entering it without delay, he seized the oars, and, aided by a flowing tide, he industriously urged it toward the distant spires of Boston.

The parting shades of the night were yet struggling with the advance of day, when a powerful flash of light illuminated the hazy horizon, and the roar of cannon, which had ceased toward morning, was again heard. But this time the sounds came from the water, and a cloud rose above the smoking harbor, announcing that the ships were again enlisted in the contest. This sudden cannonade induced Lionel to steer his boat between the islands ; for the castle and southern batteries of the town were all soon united in pouring out their vengeance on the laborers, who still occupied the heights of Dorchester. As the little vessel glided by a tall frigate, Cecil saw the boy, who had been her first escort in the wanderings of the preceding night, standing on its taffrail, rubbing his eyes with wonder, and staring at those hills, whose possession he had prophesied would lead to such bloody results. In short, while he labored at the oars, Lionel witnessed the opening scene of Breed's acted anew, as battery after battery, and ship after ship, brought their guns to bear on the hardy countrymen, who had once more hastened a crisis by their daring enterprise. Their boat passed unheeded, in the excitement and bustle of the moment, and the mists of the morning had not yet dissipated, when it shot by the wharves of Boston, and, turning into the narrow entrance of the Town dock, it touched the land, near the warehouse, where it had so often been moored, in more peaceable times, by its simple master.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Now cracks a noble heart ;—good night,
Sweet prince."—SHAKESPEARE.

LIONEL assisted Cecil to ascend the difficult water-stairs, and, still attended by their aged companion, they soon stood on the drawbridge that connected the piers which formed the mouth of the narrow basin.

"Here we again part," he said, addressing himself to Ralph ; "at another opportunity let us resume your melancholy tale."

"None so fitting as the present : the time, the place, and the state of the town, are all favorable."

Lionel cast his eyes around on the dull misery which pervaded the neglected area. A few half-dressed soldiers and alarmed townsmen were seen, by the gray light of the morning, rushing across the square towards the point whence the sounds of cannon proceeded. In the hurry of the moment, their own arrival was not noted.

"The place—the time !" he slowly repeated.

"Ay, both. At what moment can the friend of liberty pass more unheeded amongst these miscreant hirelings than now, when fear has broken their slumbers ! Yon is the place," he said, pointing to the warehouse, "where all that I have uttered will find its confirmation."

Major Lincoln communed momentarily with his thoughts. It is probable, that, in the rapid glances of his mind, he traced the mysterious connection between the abject tenant of the adjacent building, and the deceased grandmother of his bride, whose active agency in producing the calamities of his family had now been openly acknowledged. It was soon apparent, that he wavered in his purpose ; nor was he slow to declare it.

"I will attend you," he said ; "for who can say what the hardihood of the rebels may next attempt ; and future occasions may be wanting. I will first see this gentle charge of mine——"

"Lincoln, I cannot—must not leave you," interrupted Cecil, with earnest fervor—"go, listen, and learn all ; surely there can be nothing that a wife may not know !"

Without waiting for further objection, Ralph made a hurried gesture of compliance, and, turning, he led the way, with his usual swift footsteps, into the low and dark

tenement of Abigail Pray. The commotion of the town had not yet reached the despised and neglected building, which was even more than ordinarily gloomy and still. As they picked their way, however, among the scattered hemp, across the scene of the preceding night's riot, a few stifled groans proceeded from one of the towers, and directed them where to seek its abused and suffering inmates. On opening the door of this little apartment, not only Lionel and Cecil paused, but even the immovable old man appeared to hesitate, in wonder.

The heart-stricken mother of the simpleton was seated on her humble stool, busied in repairing some mean and worthless garments which had, seemingly, been exposed to the wasteful carelessness of her reckless child. But while her fingers performed their functions with mechanical skill, her contracted brow, working muscles, and hard, dry eyes, betrayed the force of the mental suffering that she struggled to conceal. Job still lay stretched on his abject pallet, though his breathing was louder and more labored than when we last left him, while his sunken features indicated the slow, but encroaching advances of the disease. Polwarth was seated at his side, holding a pulse, with an air of medical deliberation; and attempting, every few moments, to confirm his hopes or fears, as each preponderated in turn, by examining the glazed eyes of the subject of his care.

Upon a party thus occupied, and with feelings so much engrossed, even the sudden entrance of the intruders was not likely to make any very sensible impression. The languid and unmeaning look of Job wandered momentarily towards the door, and then became again fixed on vacancy. A gleam of joy shot into the honest visage of the captain, when he first beheld Lionel, accompanied by Cecil, but it was instantly chased away by the settled meaning of care, which had gotten the mastery of his usually contented expression. The greatest alteration was produced in the aspect of the woman, who bowed her head to her bosom, with a universal shudder of her frame, as Ralph stood unexpectedly before her. But from her, also, the sudden emotion passed speedily away, her hands resuming their humble occupation, with the same mechanical and involuntary movements, as before.

"Explain this scene of silent sorrow!" said Lionel to his friend—"how came you in this haunt of wretchedness? and who has harmed the lad?"

"Your question conveys its own answer, Major Lincoln," returned Polwarth, with a manner so deliberate, that he refused to raise his steady look from the face of the sufferer—"I am here, because they are wretched!"

"The motive is commendable! but what aileth the youth?"

"The functions of nature seem suspended by some remarkable calamity! I found him suffering from inanition, and notwithstanding I applied as hearty and nutritious a meal as the strongest man in the garrison could require, the symptoms, as you see, are strangely threatening!"

"He has taken the contagion of the town, and you have fed him, when his fever was at the highest!"

"Is small-pox to be considered more than a symptom, when a man has the damnable disease of starvation! go to—go to, Leo; you read the Latin poets so much at the schools, that no leisure is left to bestow on the philosophy of nature. There is an inward monitor, that teaches every child the remedy for hunger."

Lionel felt no disposition to contend with his friend on a point where the other's opinions were so dogmatical, but, turning to the woman, he said—

"The experience of a professional nurse should have taught you, at least, more care."

"Can experience steel a mother to the yearnings of her offspring for food?" returned the forlorn Abigail—"no, no—the ear cannot be deaf to such a moaning, and wisdom is as folly when the heart bleeds."

"Lincoln, you chide unkindly," said Cecil—"let us rather attempt to avert the danger, than quarrel with its cause."

"It is too late—it is too late," returned the disconsolate mother; "his hours are already numbered, and death is on him. I can now only pray that God will lighten his curse and suffer the parting spirit to know his Almighty power."

"Throw aside these worthless rags," said Cecil, gently attempting to take the clothes, "nor fatigue yourself longer, at such a sacred moment with unnecessary labor."

"Young lady, you little know a mother's longings; may you never know her sorrows! I have been doing for the child these seven-and-twenty years; rob me not of the pleasure, now that so little remains to be done."

"Is he then so old!" exclaimed Lionel, in surprise.

"Old as he is, 'tis young for a child to die! He wants

the look of reason ; heaven in its mercy grant that he may be found to have a face of innocence !”

Hitherto Ralph had remained where he first stood, as if riveted to the floor, with his eyes fastened on the countenance of the sufferer. He now turned to Lionel, and, in a voice rendered even plaintive by his deep emotion, he asked the simple question—

“Will he die ?”

“I fear it—that look is not easily to be mistaken.”

With a step so light that it was inaudible, the old man moved to the bed, and seated himself on the side, opposite to Polwarth. Without regarding the wondering look of the captain, he waved his hand on high, as if to exhort to silence, and then, gazing on the features of the sick, with melancholy interest, he said—

“Here, then, is death again ! None are so young as to be unheeded ; ’tis only the old that cannot die. Tell me, Job, what seest thou in the visions of thy mind—the unknown places of the damned, or the brightness of such as stand in the presence of their God ?”

At the well-known sound of his voice, the glazed eye of the simpleton lighted with a ray of reason, and was turned toward the speaker, once more, teeming with a look of meek assurance. The rattling in his throat, for a moment, increased, and then ceased entirely ; when a voice so deep, that it appeared to issue from the depths of his chest, was heard saying—

“The Lord won’t harm him who never harm’d the creatures of the Lord !”

“Emperors and kings, yea, the great of the earth, might envy thee thy lot, thou unknown child of wretchedness !” returned Ralph. “Not yet thirty years of probation, and already thou throwest aside the clay ! Like thee did I grow to manhood, and learn how hard it is to live ; but like thee I cannot die !—Tell me, boy, dost thou enjoy the freedom of the spirit, or hast thou still pain and pleasure in the flesh ? Dost see beyond the tomb, and trace thy route through the pathless air, or is all yet hid in the darkness of the grave ?”

“Job is going where the Lord has hid his reason,” answered the same hollow voice as before ; “his prayers won’t be foolish any longer.”

“Pray, then, for one aged and forlorn ; who has borne the burden of life till Death has forgotten him, and who wearies of the things of earth, where all is treachery at 1

sin. But stay ; depart not till thy spirit can bear the signs of repentance from yon sinful woman into the regions of day."

Abigail groaned aloud ; her hands again refused their occupation, and her head once more sunk on her bosom in abject misery. From this posture of self-abasement and grief, the woman raised herself to her feet, and, putting aside the careless tresses of dark hair, which, though here and there streaked with gray, retained much of their youthful gloss, she looked about her with a face so haggard, and eyes so full of meaning, that common attention was instantly attracted to her movements.

"The time has come, and neither fear nor shame shall longer tie my tongue," she said. "The hand of Providence is too manifest in this assemblage around the death-bed of that boy, to be unheeded. Major Lincoln, in that stricken and helpless child, you see one who shares your blood, though he has ever been a stranger to your happiness. Job is your brother !"

"Grief has maddened her !" exclaimed the anxious Cecil—"she knows not what she utters."

"'Tis true !" said the calm tones of Ralph.

"Listen," continued Abigail ; "a terrible witness, sent hither by heaven, speaks to attest I tell no lie. The secret of my transgression is known to him, when I had thought it buried in the affection of one only who owed me everything."

"Woman !" said Lionel, "in attempting to deceive me, you deceive yourself. Though a voice from heaven should declare the truth of thy damnable tale, still would I deny that foul object being the child of my beauteous mother."

"Foul and wretched as you see him, he is the offspring of one not less fair, though far less fortunate, than thy own boasted parent, proud child of prosperity ! Call on heaven as thou wilt, with that blasphemous tongue, he is no less thy brother, and the elder born."

"'Tis true—'tis true—'tis most solemnly a truth !" repeated the unmoved and aged stranger.

"It cannot be !" cried Cecil—"Lincoln, credit them not ; they contradict themselves."

"Out of thy own mouth will I find reasons to convince you," said Abigail. "Hast thou not owned the influence of the son at the altar ? Why should one, vain, ignorant, and young as I was, be insensible to the seductions of the father !"

"The child is, then, thine!" exclaimed Lionel, once more breathing with freedom—"proceed with thy tale; you confide it to friends!"

"Yes—yes," cried Abigail, clasping her hands, and speaking with bitter emphasis; "you have all the consolation of proving the difference between the guilt of woman and that of man! Major Lincoln, accursed and polluted as you see me, thy own mother was not more innocent nor fair, when my youthful beauty caught thy father's eye. He was great and powerful, and I unknown and frail—yon miserable proof of our transgression did not appear, until he had met your happier mother!"

"Can this be so?"

"The holy Gospels are not more true!" murmured Ralph.

"And my father! did he—could he desert thee in thy need?"

"Shame came when virtue and pride had been long forgotten. I was a dependent of his own proud race, and opportunities were not wanting to mark his wandering looks and growing love for the chaste Priscilla. He never knew my state. While I was stricken to the earth by the fruits of guilt, he proved how easy it is for us to forget, in the days of prosperity, the companions of our shame. At length, you were born; and, unknown to him, I received his new-born heir from the hands of his jealous aunt. What accursed thoughts beset me at that bitter moment! But, praised be God in heaven, they passed away, and I was spared the sin of murder!"

"Murder!"

"Even of murder. You know not the desperate thoughts the wretched harbor for relief! But opportunity was not long wanting, and I enjoyed the momentary, hellish pleasure of revenge. Your father went in quest of his rights, and disease attacked his beloved wife. Yes, foul and unseemly as is my wretched child, the beauty of thy mother was changed to a look still more hideous! Such as Job now seems, was the injured woman on her death-bed. I feel all thy justice, Lord of power, and bow before thy will!"

"Injured woman!" repeated Lionel, "say on, and I will bless thee!"

Abigail gave a groan, so deep and hollow, that, for a moment, the listeners believed it was the parting struggle of the spirit of her son, and she sunk, helplessly, into her seat, again concealing her features in her dress.

"Injured woman!" slowly repeated Ralph, with the most taunting contempt in his accents—"what punishment does not a wanton merit?"

"Ay, injured!" cried the awakened son—"my life on it, thy tale, at least, is false."

The old man was silent, but his lips moved rapidly, as if he muttered an incredulous reply to himself, while a scornful smile cast its bright and peculiar meaning across the wasted lineaments of his face.

"I know not what you may have heard from others," continued Abigail, speaking so low that her words were nearly lost in the difficult and measured breathing of Job—"but I call heaven to witness, that you, now, shall hear no lie. The laws of the province commanded that the victims of the foul distemper should be kept apart, and your mother was placed at the mercy of myself, and one other, who loved her still less than I."

"Just Providence! you did no violence?"

"The disease spared us such a crime. She died in her new deformity, while I remained a looker-on, if not in the beauty of my innocence, still free from the withering touch of scorn and want. Yes, I found a sinful, but flattering consolation in that thought! Vain, weak, and foolish as I had been, never did I regard my own fresh beauty with half the inward pleasure that I looked upon the foulness of my rival. Your aunt, too—she was not without the instigations of the worker of mischief."

"Speak only of my mother," interrupted the impatient Lionel—"of my aunt I already know the whole."

"Unmoved and calculating as she was, how little did she understand good from evil! She even thought to crack the heart-strings, and render whole, by her weak inventions, that which the power of God could only create. The gentle spirit of thy mother had hardly departed, before a vile plot was hatched to destroy the purity of her fame. Blinded fools that we were! She thought to lead by her soothing arts, aided by his wounded affections, the husband to the feet of her own daughter, the innocent mother of her who stands beside thee; and I was so vain as to hope, that, in time, justice and my boy might plead with the father and seducer, and raise me to the envied station of her whom I hated."

"And this foul calumny you repeated, with all its basest coloring, to my abused father?"

"We did—we did; yes, God, he knows we did! and when

he hesitated to believe, I took the holy Evangelists as witnesses of my truth!"

"And he," said Lionel, nearly choked by his emotions—"he believed it!"

"When he heard the solemn oath of one, whose whole guilt, he thought, lay in her weakness to himself, he did. As we listened to his terrible denunciations, and saw the frown which darkened his manly beauty, we both thought we had succeeded. / But how little did we know the difference between rooted passion and passing inclination! The heart we thought to alienate from its dead partner, we destroyed; and the reason we conspired to deceive, was maddened!"

When her voice ceased, so profound a silence reigned in the place, that the roar of the distant cannonade sounded close at hand, and even the low murmurs of the excited town swept by, like the whisperings of the wind. Job suddenly ceased to breathe, as though his spirit had only lingered to hear the confession of his mother, and Polwarth dropped the arm of the dead simpleton, unconscious of the interest he had so lately taken in his fate. In the midst of this death-like stillness, the old man stole from the side of the body, and stood before the self-condemned Abigail, whose form was writhing under her mental anguish. Crouching more like a tiger than a man, he sprang upon her, with a cry so sudden, so wild, and so horrid, that it caused all within its hearing to shudder with instant dread.

"Beldame!" he shouted, "I have thee now! Bring hither the book! the blessed, holy word of God! Let her swear, let her swear! Let her damn her perjured soul, in impious oaths——"

"Monster! release the woman!" cried Lionel, advancing to the assistance of the struggling penitent; "thou, too, hoary-headed wretch, hast deceived me!"

"Lincoln! Lincoln!" shrieked Cecil, "stay that unnatural hand! you raise it on thy father!"

Lionel staggered back to the wall, where he stood motionless, and gasping for breath. Left to work his own frantic will, the maniac would speedily have terminated the sorrows of the wretched woman, had not the door been burst open with a crash, and the stranger, who was left, by the cunning of the madman, in the custody of the Americans, rushed to the rescue.

"I know your yell, my gentle baronet!" cried the aroused keeper, for such in truth he was, "and I have a

mark for your malice, which would have gladly had me hung! But I have not followed you from kingdom to kingdom—from Europe to America, to be cheated by a lunatic!”

It was apparent, by the lowering look of the fellow, how deeply he resented the danger he had just escaped, as he sprang forward to seize his prisoner. Ralph abandoned his hold the instant this hated object appeared, and he darted upon the breast of the other with the undaunted fury that a lion, at bay, would turn upon its foe. The struggle was fierce and obstinate. Hoarse oaths, and the most savage execrations burst from the incensed keeper, and were blended with the wildest ravings of madness from Ralph. The excited powers of the maniac at length prevailed, and his antagonist fell under their irresistible impulse. Quicker than thought, Ralph was seen hovering on the chest of his victim, while he grasped his throat with fingers of iron.

“Vengeance is holy!” cried the maniac, bursting into a shout of horrid laughter, at his triumph, and shaking his gray locks till they flowed in wild confusion around his glowing eye-balls; “Urim and Thummin are the words of glory! Liberty is the shout! Die, damned dog! die like the fiends in darkness, and leave freedom to the air!”

By a mighty effort the gasping man released his throat a little from the gripe that nearly throttled him, and cried, with difficulty—

“For the love of heavenly justice, come to my aid!—will you see a man thus murdered?”

But he addressed himself to the sympathies of the listeners in vain. The females had hid their faces, in natural horror; the maimed Polwarth was yet without his artificial limb; and Lionel still looked upon the savage fray with a vacant eye. At this moment of despair, the hand of the keeper was seen plunging with violence into the side of Ralph, who sprang upon his feet at the third blow, laughing immoderately, but with sounds so wild and deep that they seemed to shake his inmost soul. His antagonist profited by the occasion, and darted from the room with the headlong precipitation of guilt.

The countenance of the maniac, as he now stood, struggling between life and death, changed with each fleeting impulse. The blood flowed freely from the wounds in his side, and, as the fatal tide ebbed away, a ray of passing reason lighted his pallid and ghastly features. His inward

laugh entirely ceased. The glaring eyeballs became stationary ; and his look, gradually softening, settled on the appalled pair, who took the deepest interest in his welfare. A calm and decent expression possessed those lineaments, which had just exhibited the deepest marks of the wrath of God. His lips moved in a vain effort to speak ; and, stretching forth his arms in the attitude of benediction, like the mysterious shadow of the chapel, he fell backward on the body of the lifeless and long-neglected Job, himself perfectly dead.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“I saw an aged man upon his bier,
His hair was thin and white, and on his brow
A record of the cares of many a year ;
Cares that were ended and forgotten now.
And there was sadness round, and faces bow’d,
And woman’s tears fell fast, and children wail’d aloud.”
—BRYANT.

As the day advanced, the garrison of Boston was put in motion. The same bustle, the same activity, the same gallant bearing in some, and dread reluctance in others, were exhibited as on the morning of the fight of the preceding summer. The haughty temper of the royal commander could ill brook the bold enterprise of the colonists ; and, at an early hour, orders were issued to prepare to dislodge them. Every gun that could be brought to bear upon the hills, was employed to molest the Americans, who calmly continued their labors, while shot were whistling around them on every side. Towards evening a large force was embarked and conveyed to the castle. Washington appeared on the heights, in person, and every military evidence of the intention of a resolute attack on one part, and of a stout resistance on the other, became apparent.

But the fatal experience of Breed’s had taught a lesson that was still remembered. The same leaders were to be the principal actors in the coming scene, and it was necessary to use the remnants of many of the very regiments which had bled so freely on the former occasion. The half-trained husbandmen of the colonies were no longer despised ; and the bold operations of the past winter had

taught the English generals that, as subordination increased among their foes, their movements were conducted with a more vigorous direction of their numbers. The day was accordingly wasted in preparations. Thousands of men slept on their arms that night, in either army, in the expectation of rising, on the following morning, to be led to the field of slaughter.

It is not improbable from the tardiness of their movements, that a large majority of the royal forces did not regret the providential interposition, which certainly saved them torrents of blood, and not improbably the ignominy of a defeat. One of the sudden tempests of the climate arose in the darkness, driving before it men and beasts, to seek protection, in their imbecility, from the more powerful warring of the elements. The golden moments were lost; and, after enduring so many privations, and expending so many lives, in vain, Howe sullenly commenced his arrangements to abandon a town, on which the English ministry had, for years, lavished their indignation, with all the acrimony, and, as it now seemed, with the impotency of a blind revenge.

To carry into effect this sudden and necessary determination, was not the work of an hour. As it was the desire of the Americans, however, to receive their town back again as little injured as possible, they forbore to push the advantage they possessed, by occupying those heights, which, in a great measure, commanded the anchorage, as well as a new and vulnerable face of the defences of the king's army. While the semblance of hostilities was maintained by an irregular and impotent cannonade, conducted with so little spirit as to wear the appearance of being intended only to amuse, one side was diligently occupied in preparing to depart, and the other was passively awaiting the moment when they might peaceably repossess their own. It is unnecessary to remind the reader, that the entire command of the sea, by the British, would have rendered any serious attempt to arrest their movements, perfectly futile.

In this manner a week was passed, after the tempest had abated—the place exhibiting, throughout this period, all the hurry and bustle, the joy and distress, that such an unlooked-for event was likely to create.

Towards the close of one of those busy and stirring days, a short funeral train was seen issuing from a building, which had long been known as the residence of one

of the proudest families in the province. Above the outer door of the mansion was suspended a gloomy hatchment, charged with the "courant" deer of Lincoln, encircled by the usual mementos of mortality, and bearing the rare symbol of the "bloody-hand."—This emblem of heraldic grief, which was never adopted in the provinces, except at the death of one of high importance, a custom that has long since disappeared with the usages of the monarchy, had caught the eyes of a few idle boys, who alone were sufficiently unoccupied, at that pressing moment, to note its exhibition. With the addition of these truant urchins the melancholy procession took its way toward the neighboring church-yard of the King's Chapel.

The large bier was covered by a pall so ample, that it swept the stones of the threshold, while entering into the body of the church. Here it was met by the divine we have had occasion to mention more than once, who gazed, with a look of strange interest, at the solitary and youthful mourner, that closely followed in his dark weeds. The ceremony, however, proceeded with the usual solemnity, and the attendants slowly moved deeper into the sacred edifice. Next to the young man, came the well-known persons of the British commander-in-chief, and of his quick-witted and favorite lieutenant. Between them walked an officer of inferior rank, who, notwithstanding his maimed condition, had been able, by the deliberation of the march, to beguile the ears of his companions, to the very moment of meeting the clergyman, with some tale of no little interest, and great apparent mystery. The remainder of the train, which consisted only of the family of the two generals, and a few menials, came last, if we except the idlers, who stole curiously in their footsteps.

When the service was ended, the same private communication was resumed between the two chieftains and their companion, and continued until they arrived at the open vault, in a distant corner of the enclosure. Here the low conversation ended; and the eye of Howe, which had hitherto been riveted in deep attention on the speaker, began to wander in the direction of the dangerous hills occupied by his enemies. The interruption seemed to have broken the charm of the secret conversation; and the anxious countenances of both the leaders betrayed how soon their thoughts had wandered from a tale of great private distress to their own heavier cares and duties.

The bier was placed before the opening, and the assist-

ants of the sexton advanced to perform their office. When the pall was removed, to the evident amazement of most of the spectators, two coffins were exposed to view. One was clothed in black velvet, studded with silver nails, and ornamented after the richest fashions of human pride, while the other lay in the simple nakedness of the clouded wood. On the breast of the first rose a heavy silver plate, bearing a long inscription, and decorated with the usual devices of heraldry; and on the latter were simply carved on the lid the two initial letters J. P.

The impatient looks of the English generals intimated to Dr. Liturgy the value of every moment, and in less time than we consume in relating it, the bodies of the high-descended man of wealth, and of his nameless companion, were lowered into the vault, and left to decay, in silent contact, with that of the woman who, in life, had been so severe a scourge to both. After a hesitation of a single moment, in deference to the young mourner, the gentlemen present, perceiving that he manifested a wish to remain, quitted the place in a body, with the exception of the maimed officer, already mentioned, whom the reader has at once recognized to be Polwarth. When the men had replaced the stone above the mouth of the vault, securing it by a stout bar of iron, and a heavy lock, they delivered the key to the principal actor in the scene. He received it in silence, and, dropping gold into their hands, motioned to them to depart.

In another instant, a careless observer would have thought, that Lionel and his friend were the only living possessors of the church-yard. But under the adjoining wall, partly hid from observation by the numerous headstones, was the form of a woman, bowed to the earth, while her figure was concealed by the cloak she had gathered shapelessly about her. As soon as the gentlemen perceived they were alone, they slowly advanced to the side of this desolate being.

Their approaching footsteps were not unheeded, though, instead of facing those who so evidently wished to address her, she turned to the wall, and began to trace, with unconscious fingers, the letters of a tablet in slate, which was let into the brickwork, to mark the position of the tomb of the Lechmeres.

"We can do no more," said the young mourner—"all now rest with a mightier hand than any of earth."

The squalid limb, that was thrust from beneath the red

garment, trembled, but it still continued its unmeaning employment.

"Sir Lionel Lincoln speaks to you," said Polwarth, on whose arm the youthful baronet leaned.

"Who!" shrieked Abigail Pray, casting aside her covering, and baring those sunken features, on which misery had made terrible additional inroads, within a few days—"I had forgotten—I had forgotten! the son succeeds the father; but the mother must follow her child to the grave!"

"He is honorably interred with those of his blood, and by the side of one who loved his simple integrity!"

"Yes, he is better lodged in death than he was in life! Thank God! he can never know cold nor hunger more!"

"You will find that I have made a provision for your future comfort; and I trust that the close of your life will be happier than its prime."

"I am alone," said the woman, hoarsely. "The old will avoid me, and the young will look upon me in scorn! Perjury and revenge lie heavy on my soul!"

The young baronet was silent, but Polwarth assumed the right to reply—

"I will not pretend to assert," said the worthy captain, "that these are not both wicked companions; but I have no doubt you will find, somewhere in the Bible, a suitable consolation for each particular offence. Let me recommend to you a hearty diet, and I'll answer for an easy conscience. I never knew the prescription fail. Look about you in the world—does your well-fed villain feel remorse! No; it's only when his stomach is empty, that he begins to think of his errors! I would also suggest the expediency of commencing soon, with something substantial, as you show altogether too much bone, at present, for a thriving condition. I would not wish to say anything distressing, but we both of us may remember a case where the nourishment came too late."

"Yes, yes, it came too late!" murmured the conscience-stricken woman—"all comes too late! even the penitence, I fear!"

"Say not so," observed Lionel; "you do outrage to the promises of One who never spoke false."

Abigail stole a fearful glance at him, which expressed all the secret terror of her soul, as she half whispered—

"Who witnessed the end of Madam Lechmere! did her spirit pass in peace?"

Sir Lionel again remained profoundly silent.

"I thought it," she continued—" 'tis not a sin to be forgotten on a death-bed ! To plot evil, and call on God, aloud, to look upon it ! Ay ! and to madden a brain, and strip a soul like his to nakedness ! Go," she added, beckoning them away with earnestness—" ye are young and happy ; why should ye linger near the grave ! Leave me, that I may pray among the tombs ! If anything can smoothe the bitter moment, it is prayer."

Lionel dropped the key he held in his hand at her feet, and said, before he left her—

"Yon vault is closed forever, unless, at your request, it should be opened, at some future time, to place you by the side of your son. The children of those who built it are already gathered there, with the exception of two, who go to the other hemisphere to leave their bones. Take it, and may Heaven forgive you, as I do."

He let fall a heavy purse by the side of the key, and, without uttering more, he again took the arm of Polwarth, and together they left the place.

As they turned through the gate-way, into the street, each stole a glance at the distant woman. She had risen to her knees ; her hands had grasped a head-stone, and her face was bowed nearly to the earth, while, by the writhing of her form, and the humility of her attitude, it was apparent that her spirit struggled powerfully with the Lord for mercy.

Three days afterwards the Americans entered, triumphantly, on the retiring footsteps of the royal army. The first among them, who hastened to visit the graves of their fathers, found the body of a woman, who had, seemingly, died under the severity of the season. She had unlocked the vault, in a vain effort to reach her child, and there her strength had failed her. Her limbs were decently stretched on the faded grass, while her features were composed, exhibiting in death the bland traces of that remarkable beauty which had distinguished and betrayed her youth. The gold still lay neglected, where it had fallen.

The amazed townsmen avoided this spectacle with horror, rushing into other places to gaze at the changes and the destruction of their beloved birthplace. But a follower of the royal army, who had lingered to plunder, and who had witnessed the interview between the officers and Abigail, shortly succeeded them. He lifted the flag, and, lowering the body, closed the vault ; then hurling away the key, he seized the money, and departed.

The slate has long since mouldered from the wall ; the sod has covered the stone, and few are left who can designate the spot where the proud families of Lechmere and Lincoln were wont to inter their dead.

Sir Lionel and Polwarth proceeded, in the deepest silence, to the Long-wharf, where a boat received them. They were rowed to the much admired frigate, that was standing off-and-on, under easy sail, waiting their arrival. On her decks they met Agnes Danforth, with her eyes softened by tears, though a rich flush mantled on her cheeks, at witnessing the compelled departure of those invaders she had never loved.

"I have only remained to give you a parting kiss, cousin Lionel," said the frank girl, affectionately saluting him, "and now shall take my leave, without repeating those wishes that you know are so often conveyed in my prayers."

"You will then leave us?" said the young baronet, smiling for the first time in many a day. "You know that this cruelty——"

He was interrupted by a loud hem from Polwarth, who advanced, and, taking the hand of the lady, repeated his wish to retain it forever, for at least the fiftieth time. She heard him, in silence, and with much apparent respect, though an arch smile stole upon her gravity, before he had ended. She then thanked him with suitable grace, and gave a final and decided refusal. The captain sustained the repulse like one who had seen much similar service, and politely lent his assistance to help the obdurate girl into her boat. Here she was received by a young man, who was apparelled like an American officer. Sir Lionel thought the bloom on her cheek deepened, as her companion assiduously drew a cloak around her form to protect her from the chill of the water. Instead of returning to the town, the boat, which bore a flag, pulled directly for the shore occupied by the Americans. The following week, Agnes was united to this gentleman, in the bosom of her own family. They soon after took quiet possession of the house in Tremont Street, and of all the large real estate left by Mrs. Lechmere, which had been previously bestowed on her, by Cecil, as a dowry.

As soon as his passengers appeared, the captain of the frigate communicated with his admiral, by signal, and received, in return, the expected order to proceed in the execution of his trust. In a few minutes the swift vessel

was gliding by the heights of Dorchester, training her guns on the adverse hills, and hurriedly spreading her canvas as she passed. The Americans, however, looked on in sullen silence, and she was suffered to gain the open ocean, unmolested, when she made the best of her way to England, with the important intelligence of the intended evacuation.

She was speedily followed by the fleet, since which period, the long-oppressed and devoted town of Boston has never been visited by an armed enemy.

During their passage to England, sufficient time was allowed Lionel and his gentle companion, to reflect on all that had occurred. Together, and in the fullest confidence, they traced the wanderings of intellect which had so closely and mysteriously connected the deranged father with his impotent child ; and, as they reasoned, by descending to the secret springs of his disordered impulses, they were easily enabled to divest the incidents we have endeavored to relate of all their obscurity and doubt.

The keeper, who had been sent in quest of the fugitive madman, never returned to his native land. No offers of forgiveness could induce the unwilling agent in the death of the baronet to trust his person, again, within the influence of the British laws. Perhaps he was conscious of a motive, that none but an inward monitor might detect. Lionel, tired at length with importuning without success, commissioned the husband of Agnes to place him in a situation, where, by industry, his future comfort was amply secured.

Polwarth died quite lately. Notwithstanding his maimed limb, he contrived, by the assistance of his friend, to ascend the ladder of promotion, by regular gradations, nearly to its summit. At the close of his long life, he wrote Gen., Bart., and M. P. after his name. When England was threatened with the French invasion, the garrison he commanded was distinguished for being better provisioned than any other in the realm, and no doubt it would have made a resistance equal to its resources. In Parliament, where he sat for one of the Lincoln boroughs, he was chiefly distinguished for the patience with which he listened to the debates, and for the remarkable cordiality of the "ay" that he pronounced on every vote for supplies. To the day of his death, he was a strenuous advocate for the virtues of a rich diet, in all cases of physical suffering, "especially," as he would add, with an obstinacy that

fed itself, "in instances of debility from febrile symptoms."

Within a year of their arrival, the uncle of Cecil died, having shortly before followed an only son to the grave. By this unlooked-for event, Lady Lincoln became the possessor of his large estates, as well as of an ancient barony, that descended to the heirs general. From this time until the eruption of the French revolution, Sir Lionel Lincoln, and Lady Cardonnell, as Cecil was now styled, lived together in sweetest concord ; the gentle influence of her affection moulding and bending the feverish temperament of her husband, at will. The heirloom of the family, that distempered feeling so often mentioned, was forgotten, in the even tenor of their happiness. When the heaviest pressure on the British constitution was apprehended, and it became the policy of the minister to enlist the wealth and talent of his nation in its support, by proping the existing administration, the rich baronet received a peerage in his own person. Before the end of the century, he was further advanced to a dormant earldom, that had, in former ages, been one of the honors of an elder branch of his family.

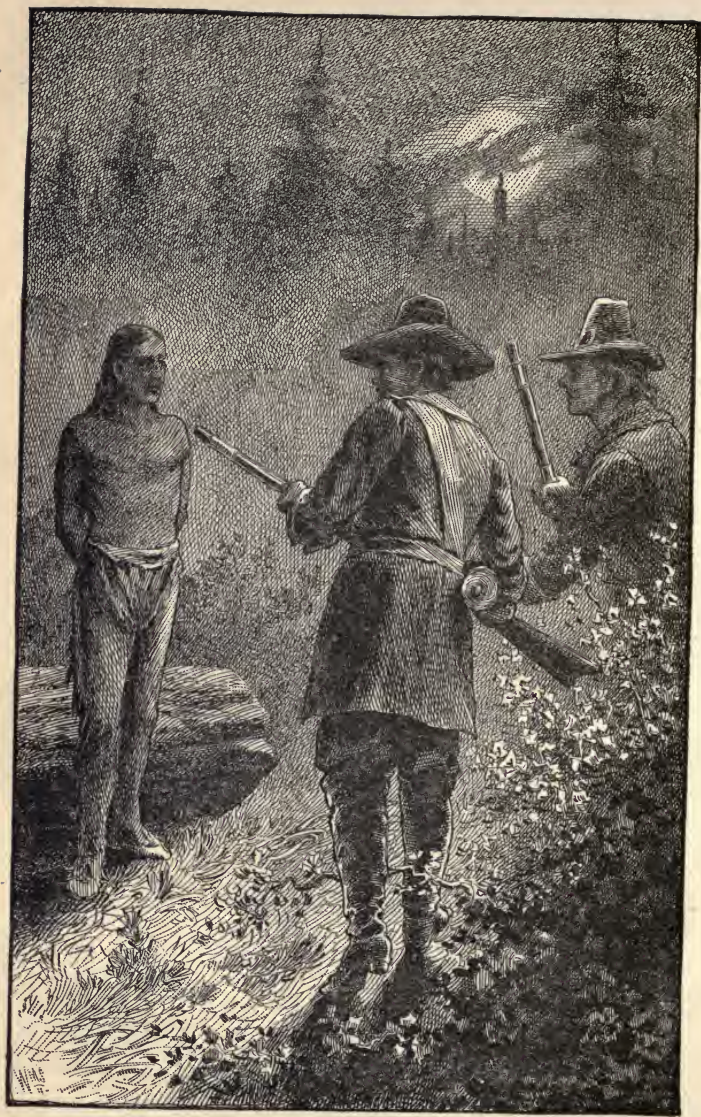
Of all the principal actors in the foregoing tale, not one is now living. Even the roses of Cecil and Agnes have long since ceased to bloom, and Death has gathered them in peace and innocence, with all that had gone before. The historical facts of our legend are beginning to be obscured by time ; and it is more than probable, that the prosperous and affluent English peer, who now enjoys the honors of the house of Lincoln, never knew the secret history of his family while it sojourned in a remote province of the British empire.

THE END.

1871

My dear Mr. [Name]

I have just received your letter of the 10th inst. and am
glad to hear that you are well. I am
also well and hope this letter finds you
the same. I have been thinking of you
very much lately and wondering how
you are getting on. I have been
very busy lately but I have managed
to find some time to write you.
I have been thinking of you very
much lately and wondering how
you are getting on. I have been
very busy lately but I have managed
to find some time to write you.
I have been thinking of you very
much lately and wondering how
you are getting on. I have been
very busy lately but I have managed
to find some time to write you.



"The Indian lad rose deliberately to his feet, and stood before them in the sullen dignity of a captured warrior."

—*The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, page 54.

THE
WEPT OF WISH-TON-WISH

A TALE

BY
J. FENIMORE COOPER

"But she is dead to him, to all
Her lute hangs silent on the wall
And on the stairs, and at the door
Her fairy step is heard no more."—ROGERS

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

THE REV. J. R. C.,

OF

***** PENNSYLVANIA.

THE kind and disinterested manner in which you have furnished the materials of the following tale, merits a public acknowledgment. As your reluctance to appear before the world, however, imposes a restraint, you must receive such evidence of gratitude as your own prohibition will allow.

Notwithstanding there are so many striking and deeply interesting events in the early history of those from whom you derive your being, yet are there hundreds of other families in this country, whose traditions, though less accurately and minutely preserved than the little narrative you have submitted to my inspection, would supply the materials of many moving tales. You have every reason to exult in your descent, for, surely, if any man may claim to be a citizen and a proprietor in the Union, it is one, that, like yourself, can point to a line of ancestors, whose origin is lost in the obscurity of time. You are truly an American. In your eyes, we of a brief century or two must appear as little more than denizens quite recently admitted to the privilege of a residence. That you may continue to enjoy peace and happiness, in that land where your fathers so long flourished, is the sincere wish of your obliged friend.

PREFACE.

AT this distant period, when Indian traditions are listened to with the interest that we lend to the events of a dark age, it is not easy to convey a vivid image of the dangers and privations that our ancestors encountered, in preparing the land we enjoy for its present state of security and abundance. It is the humble object of the tale that will be found in the succeeding pages, to perpetuate the recollection of some of the practices and events peculiar to the early days of our history.

The general character of the warfare pursued by the natives is too well known to require any preliminary observations; but it may be advisable to direct the attention of the reader, for a few moments, to those leading circumstances in the history of the times, that may have some connection with the principal business of the legend.

The territory which now composes the three states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, is said, by the best-informed of our annalists, to have been formerly occupied by four great nations of Indians, who were, as usual, subdivided into numberless dependent tribes. Of these people, the Massachusetts possessed a large portion of the land which now composes the state of that name; the Wampanoags dwelt in what was once the Colony of Plymouth, and in the northern districts of the Providence Plantations; the Narragansetts held the well-known islands of the beautiful bay which receives its name from their nation, and the more southern counties of the Plantations; while the Pequots, or, as it is ordinarily written and pronounced, the Pequods, were masters of a broad region that lay along the western boundaries of the three other districts.

There is great obscurity thrown around the polity of the Indians who usually occupied the country lying near the sea.

The Europeans, accustomed to despotic governments, very naturally supposed that the chiefs, found in possession of power, were monarchs to whom authority had been transmitted in virtue of their birthrights. They consequently gave them the name of kings.

How far this opinion of the governments of the aborigines was true remains a question, though there is certainly reason to think it less erroneous in respect to the tribes of the Atlantic states, than to those who have since been found further west, where it is sufficiently known that institutions exist which approach much nearer to republics than to monarchies. It may, however, have readily happened that the son, profiting by the advantages of his situation, often succeeded to the authority of the father, by the aid of influence, when the established regulations of the tribe acknowledged no hereditary claim. Let the principle of the descent of power be what it would, it is certain the experience of our ancestors proves, that, in very many instances, the child was seen to occupy the station formerly filled by the father; and that in most of those situations of emergency, in which a people so violent were often placed, the authority he exercised was as summary as it was general. The appellation of Uncas came, like those of the Cæsars and Pharaohs, to be a sort of synonyme for chief with the Mohegans, a tribe of the Pequods, among whom several warriors of this name were known to govern in due succession. The renowned Metacom, or, as he is better known to the whites, King Philip, was certainly the son of Massasoit, the Sachem of the Wampanoags that the emigrants found in authority when they landed on the rock of Plymouth. Miantonimoh, the daring but hapless rival of that Uncas who ruled the whole of the Pequod nation, was succeeded in authority among the Narragansetts, by his not less heroic and enterprising son, Conanchet; and, even at a much later day, we find instances of this transmission of power, which furnish strong reasons for believing that the order of succession was in the direct line of blood.

The early annals of our history are not wanting in touching and noble examples of savage heroism. Virginia has its legend of the powerful Powhatan and his magnanimous daughter, the ill-requited Pocahontas; and the chronicles of New England are filled with the bold designs and daring enterprises of Miantonimoh, of Metacom, and of Conanchet. All the last-named warriors proved themselves

worthy of better fates, dying in a cause and in a manner that, had it been their fortune to have lived in a more advanced state of society, would have enrolled their names among the worthies of the age.

The first serious war to which the settlers of New England were exposed, was the struggle with the Pequods. This people were subdued after a fierce conflict; and from being enemies, all who were not either slain or sent into distant slavery, were glad to become the auxiliaries of their conquerors. This contest occurred within less than twenty years after the Puritans had sought refuge in America.

There is reason to believe that Metacom foresaw the fate of his own people, in the humbled fortune of the Pequods. Though his father had been the earliest and constant friend of the whites, it is probable that the Puritans owed some portion of this amity to a dire necessity. We are told that a terrible malady had raged among the Wampanoags but a short time before the arrival of the emigrants, and that their numbers had been fearfully reduced by its ravages. Some authors have hinted at the probability of this disease having been the yellow fever, whose visitations are known to be at uncertain, and, apparently, at very distant intervals. Whatever might have been the cause of this destruction of his people, Massasoit is believed to have been induced, by the consequences, to cultivate the alliance of a nation who could protect him against the attacks of his ancient and less afflicted foes. But the son appears to have viewed the increasing influence of the whites with eyes more jealous than those of the father. He passed the morning of his life in maturing his great plan for the destruction of the strange race, and his later years were spent in abortive attempts to put this bold design in execution. His restless activity in plotting the confederation against the English, his fierce and ruthless manner of waging the war, his defeat, and his death, are too well known to require repetition.

There is also a wild and romantic interest thrown about the obscure history of a Frenchman of that period. This man is said to have been an officer of rank in the service of his king, and to have belonged to the privileged class which then monopolized all the dignities and emoluments of the kingdom of France. The traditions, and even the written annals of the first century of our possession of America, connect the Baron de la Castine with the Jesuits.

who were thought to entertain views of converting the savages to Christianity, not unmingled with the desire of establishing a more temporal dominion over their minds. It is, however, difficult to say whether taste, or religion, or policy, or necessity, induced this nobleman to quit the saloons of Paris for the wilds of the Penobscot. It is merely known that he passed the greater part of his life on that river, in a rude fortress that was then called a palace; that he had many wives, a numerous progeny, and that he possessed a great influence over most of the tribes that dwelt in his vicinity. He is also believed to have been the instrument of furnishing the savages who were hostile to the English, with ammunition, and with weapons of a more deadly character than those used in their earlier wars. In whatever degree he may have participated in the plan to exterminate the Puritans, death prevented him from assisting in the final effort of Metacom.

The Narragansetts are often mentioned in these pages. A few years before the period at which the tale commences, Miantonimoh had waged a ruthless war against Uncas, the Pequod or Mohegan chief. Fortune favored the latter, who, probably assisted by his civilized allies, not only overthrew the bands of the other, but succeeded in capturing the person of his enemy. The chief of the Narragansetts lost his life, through the agency of the whites, on the place that is now known by the appellation of "the Sachem's plain."

It remains only to throw a little light on the leading incidents of the war of King Philip. The first blow was struck in June, 1675, rather more than half a century after the English first landed in New England, and just a century before blood was drawn in the contest which separated the colonies from the mother country. The scene was a settlement near the celebrated Mount Hope, in Rhode Island, where Metacom and his father had both long held their councils. From this point, bloodshed and massacre extended along the whole frontier of New England. Bodies of horse and foot were enrolled to meet the foe, and towns were burnt, and lives were taken by both parties, with little, and often with no respect for age, condition or sex.

In no struggle with the native owners of the soil was the growing power of the whites placed in so great jeopardy, as in this celebrated contest with King Philip. The venerable historian of Connecticut estimates the loss of lives at nearly one-tenth of the whole number of the fighting men,

and the destruction of houses and other edifices to have been in an equal proportion. One family in every eleven, throughout all New England, was burnt out. As the colonists nearest the sea were exempt from the danger, an idea may be formed, from this calculation, of the risk and sufferings of those who dwelt in more exposed situations. The Indians did not escape without retaliation. The principal nations, already mentioned, were so much reduced as never afterward to offer any serious resistance to the whites, who have since converted the whole of their ancient hunting grounds into the abodes of civilized man. Metacom, Miantonimoh, and Conanchet, with their warriors, have become the heroes of song and legend, while the descendants of those who laid waste their dominions, and destroyed their race, are yielding a tardy tribute to the high daring and savage grandeur of their characters.

THE WEPT OF WISH-TON-WISH.

CHAPTER I.

"I may disjoin my hand, but not my faith."—SHAKESPEARE.

THE incidents of this tale must be sought in a remote period of the annals of America. A colony of self-devoted and pious refugees from religious persecution had landed on the rock of Plymouth, less than half a century before the time at which the narrative commences; and they, and their descendants, had already transformed many a broad waste of wilderness into smiling fields and cheerful villages. The labors of the emigrants had been chiefly limited to the country on the coast, which, by its proximity to the waters that rolled between them and Europe, afforded a semblance of a connection with the land of their forefathers and the distant abodes of civilization. But enterprise, and a desire to search for still more fertile domains, together with the temptation offered by the vast and unknown regions that lay along their western and northern borders, had induced many bold adventurers to penetrate more deeply into the forests. The precise spot to which we desire to transport the imagination of the reader, was one of these establishments of what may, not inaptly, be called the forlorn-hope in the march of civilization through the country.

So little was then known of the great outlines of the American continent, that, when the Lords Say and Seal, and Brooke, connected with a few associates, obtained a grant of the territory which now composes the state of Connecticut, the King of England affixed his name to a patent which constituted them proprietors of a country that should extend from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the South Sea. Notwithstanding the apparent

hopelessness of ever subduing, or of even occupying a territory like this, emigrants from the mother colony of Massachusetts were found ready to commence the Herculean labor within fifteen years from the day when they had first put foot upon the well-known rock itself. The fort of Say-Brooke, the towns of Windsor, Hartford, and New Haven, soon sprang into existence, and from that period to this, the little community which then had birth has been steadily, calmly, and prosperously advancing in its career, a model of order and reason, and the hive from which swarms of industrious, hardy, and enlightened yeomen have since spread themselves over a surface so vast as to create an impression that they still aspire to the possession of the immense regions included in their original grant.

Among the religionists whom disgust of persecution had early driven into the voluntary exile of the colonies, was more than a usual proportion of men of character and education. The reckless and the gay younger sons, soldiers unemployed, and students from the Inns of Court, early sought advancement and adventure in the more southern provinces, where slaves offered immunity from labor, and where war, with a bolder and more stirring policy, oftener gave rise to scenes of excitement, and of course, to the exercise of the faculties best suited to their habits and dispositions. The more grave, and the religiously-disposed, found refuge in the colonies of New England. Thither a multitude of private gentlemen transferred their fortunes and their families, imparting a character of intelligence and a moral elevation to the country, which it has nobly sustained to the present hour.

The nature of the civil wars in England had enlisted many men of deep and sincere piety into the profession of arms. Some of them had retired to the colonies before the troubles of the mother country reached their crisis, and others continued to arrive, throughout the whole period of their existence, until the Restoration; when crowds of those who had been disaffected to the house of Stuart sought the security of these distant possessions.

A stern, fanatical soldier, of the name of Heathcote, had been among the first of his class to throw aside the sword for the implements of industry peculiar to the advancement of a newly-established country. How far the influence of a young wife may have affected his decision, it is not germane to our present object to consider; though

the records, from which the matter we are about to relate is gleaned, give reason to suspect that he thought his domestic harmony would not be less secure in the wilds of the new world, than among the companions with whom his earlier associations would naturally have brought him in communion.

Like himself, his consort was born of one of those families, which, taking their rise in the franklins of the times of the Edwards and the Henrys, had become possessors of hereditary landed estates, that, by their gradually-increasing value, had elevated them to the station of small country gentlemen. In most other nations of Europe, they would have been rated in the class of the *petite noblesse*. But the domestic happiness of Capt. Heathcote was doomed to receive a fatal blow from a quarter where circumstances had given him but little reason to apprehend danger. The very day he landed in the long-wished-for asylum, his wife made him the father of a noble boy, a gift that she bestowed at the melancholy price of her own existence. Twenty years the senior of the woman who had followed his fortunes to these distant regions, the retired warrior had always considered it to be perfectly and absolutely within the order of things, that he himself was to be the first to pay the debt of nature. While the visions which Captain Heathcote entertained of a future world were sufficiently vivid and distinct, there is reason to think they were seen through a tolerable long vista of quiet and comfortable enjoyment in this. Though the calamity cast an additional aspect of seriousness over a character that was already more than chastened by the subtleties of sectarian doctrines, he was not of a nature to be unmanned by any vicissitude of human fortune. He lived on, useful and unbending in his habits, a pillar of strength in the way of wisdom and courage to the immediate neighborhood among whom he resided, but reluctant from temper, and from a disposition which had been shadowed by withered happiness, to enact that part in the public affairs of the little state, to which his comparative wealth and previous habits might well have entitled him to aspire. He gave his son such an education as his own resources and those of the infant colony of Massachusetts afforded, and, by a sort of delusive piety, into whose merits we have no desire to look, he thought he had also furnished a commendable evidence of his own desperate resignation to the will of Providence, in causing him to be publicly christened by

the name of Content. His own baptismal appellation was Mark ; as indeed had been that of most of his ancestors, for two or three centuries. When the world was a little uppermost in his thoughts, as sometimes happens with the most humbled spirits, he had even been heard to speak of a Sir Mark of his family, who had ridden a knight in the train of one of the more warlike kings of his native land.

There is some ground for believing that the great parent of evil early looked with a malignant eye on the example of peacefulness, and of unbending morality, that the colonists of New England were setting to the rest of Christendom. At any rate, come from what quarter they might, schisms and doctrinal contentions arose among the emigrants themselves ; and men, who together had deserted the firesides of their forefathers in quest of religious peace, were ere long seen separating their fortunes, in order that each might enjoy, unmolested, those peculiar shades of faith, which all had the presumption, no less than the folly, to believe were necessary to propitiate the omnipotent and merciful father of the universe. If our task were one of theology, a wholesome moral on the vanity, no less than on the absurdity of the race, might be here introduced to some advantage.

When Mark Heathcote announced to the community, in which he had now sojourned more than twenty years, that he intended for a second time to establish his altars in the wilderness, in the hope that he and his household might worship God as to them seemed most right, the intelligence was received with a feeling allied to awe. Doctrine and zeal were momentarily forgotten, in the respect and attachment which had been unconsciously created by the united influence of the stern severity of his air, and of the undeniable virtues of his practice. The elders of the settlement communed with him freely and in charity ; but the voice of conciliation and alliance came too late. He listened to the reasonings of the ministers, who were assembled from all the adjoining parishes, in sullen respect : and he joined in the petitions for light and instruction that were offered up on the occasion, with the deep reverence with which he ever drew near to the footstool of the Almighty ; but he did both in a temper, into which too much positiveness of spiritual pride had entered, to open his heart to that sympathy and charity, which, as they are the characteristics of our mild and forbearing doctrines, should be the study of

those who profess to follow their precepts. All that was seemly, and all that was usual, were done ; but the purpose of the stubborn sectarian remained unchanged. His final decision is worthy of being recorded.

"My youth was wasted in ungodliness and ignorance," he said, "but in my manhood have I known the Lord. Near two-score years have I toiled for the truth, and all that weary time have I passed in trimming my lamps, lest, like the foolish virgins, I should be caught unprepared ; and now, when my loins are girded and my race is nearly run, shall I become a backslider and falsifier of the word ? Much have I endured, as you know, in quitting the earthly mansions of my fathers, and in encountering the dangers of sea and land for the faith ; and, rather than let go its hold, will I once more cheerfully devote to the howling wilderness, ease, offspring, and, should it be the will of Providence, life itself !"

The day of parting was one of unfeigned and general sorrow. Notwithstanding the austerity of the old man's character, and the nearly unbending severity of his brow, the milk of human kindness had often been seen distilling from his stern nature in acts that did not admit of misinterpretation. There was scarcely a young beginner in the laborious and ill-requited husbandry of the township he inhabited, a district at no time considered either profitable or fertile, who could not recall some secret and kind aid which had flowed from a hand that, to the world, seemed clenched in cautious and reserved frugality ; nor did any of the faithful of his vicinity cast their fortunes together in wedlock, without receiving from him evidence of an interest in their worldly happiness, that was far more substantial than words.

On the morning when the vehicles, groaning with the household goods of Mark Heathcote, were seen quitting his door, and taking the road which led to the seaside, not a human being of sufficient age, within many miles of his residence, was absent from the interesting spectacle. The leave-taking, as usual on all serious occasions, was preceded by a hymn and prayer, and then the sternly-minded adventurer embraced his neighbors, with a mien, in which a subdued exterior struggled fearfully and strangely with emotions that more than once threatened to break through even the formidable barriers of his acquired manner. The inhabitants of every building on the road were in the open air, to receive and to return the parting benediction. More

than once, they who guided his teams were commanded to halt, and all near, possessing human aspirations and human responsibility, were collected to offer petitions in favor of him who departed and of those who remained. The requests for mortal privileges were somewhat light and hasty, but the askings in behalf of intellectual and spiritual light were long, fervent, and oft-repeated. In this characteristic manner did one of the first of the emigrants to the new world make his second removal into scenes of renewed bodily suffering, privation and danger.

Neither person nor property was transferred from place to place, in this country, at the middle of the seventeenth century, with the dispatch and with the facilities of the present time. The roads were necessarily few and short, and communication by water was irregular, tardy, and far from commodious. A wide barrier of forest lying between that portion of Massachusetts Bay from which Mark Heathcote emigrated, and the spot, near the Connecticut River, to which it was his intention to proceed, he was induced to adopt the latter mode of conveyance. But a long delay intervened between the time when he commenced his short journey to the coast, and the hour when he was finally enabled to embark. During this detention he and his household sojourned among the godly-minded of the narrow peninsula, where there already existed the germ of a flourishing town, and where the spires of a noble and picturesque city now elevate themselves above so many thousand roofs.

The son did not leave the colony of his birth and the haunts of his youth, with the same unwavering obedience to the call of duty as the father. There was a fair, a youthful, and a gentle being in the recently-established town of Boston, of an age, station, opinions, fortunes, and, what was of still greater importance, of sympathies suited to his own. Her form had long mingled with those holy images, which his stern instruction taught him to keep most familiarly before the mirror of his thoughts. It is not surprising, then, that the youth hailed the delay as propitious to his wishes, or that he turned it to the account which the promptings of a pure affection so naturally suggested. He was united to the gentle Ruth Harding only a week before the father sailed on his second pilgrimage.

It is not our intention to dwell on the incidents of the voyage. Though the genius of an extraordinary man had

discovered the world which was now beginning to fill with civilized men, navigation at that day was not brilliant in accomplishments. A passage among the shoals of Nantucket must have been one of actual danger, no less than of terror; and the ascent of the Connecticut itself was an exploit worthy of being mentioned. In due time the adventurers arrived at the English fort of Hartford, where they tarried for the season, in order to obtain rest and spiritual comfort. But the peculiarity of doctrine, on which Mark Heathcote laid so much stress, was one that rendered it advisable for him to retire still further from the haunts of men. Accompanied by a few followers, he proceeded on an exploring expedition, and the end of the summer found him once more established on an estate that he had acquired by the usual simple forms practised in the colonies, and at the trifling cost for which extensive districts were then set apart as the property of individuals.

The love of the things of this life, while it certainly existed, was far from being predominant in the affections of the Puritan. He was frugal from habit and principle, more than from an undue longing after worldly wealth. He contented himself, therefore, with acquiring an estate that should be valuable, rather from its quality and beauty, than from its extent. Many such places offered themselves, between the settlements of Weathersfield and Hartford and that imaginary line which separated the possessions of the colony he had quitted, from those of the one he joined. He made his location, as it is termed in the language of the country, near the northern boundary of the latter. This spot, by the aid of an expenditure that might have been considered lavish for the country and the age; of some lingering of taste, which even the self-denying and subdued habits of his later life had not entirely extinguished; and of great natural beauty in the distribution of land, water, and wood, the emigrant contrived to convert into an abode that was not more desirable for its retirement from the temptations of the world, than for its rural loveliness.

After this memorable act of conscientious self-devotion, years passed away in quiet, amid a species of negative prosperity. Rumors from the old world reached the ears of the tenants of this secluded settlement, months after the events to which they referred were elsewhere forgotten, and tumults and wars in the sister colonies came to their knowledge only at distant and tardy intervals. In the mean

time, the limits of the colonial establishments were gradually extending themselves, and valleys were beginning to be cleared nearer and nearer to their own. Old age had now begun to make some visible impression on the iron frame of the captain; and the fresh color of youth and health, with which his son had entered the forest, was giving way to the brown covering produced by exposure and toil. We say of toil, for, independently of the habits and opinions of the country, which strongly reprobated idleness, even in those most gifted by fortune, the daily difficulties of their situation, the chase, and the long and intricate passages that the veteran himself was compelled to adventure in the surrounding forest, partook largely of the nature of the term we have used. Ruth continued blooming and youthful, though maternal anxiety was soon added to her other causes of care. Still, for a long season, naught occurred to excite extraordinary regrets for the step they had taken, or to create particular uneasiness in behalf of the future. The borderers, for such by their frontier position they had in truth become, heard the strange and awful tidings of the dethronement of one king, of the interregnum, as a reign of more than usual vigor and prosperity is called, and of the restoration of the son of him who is strangely enough termed a martyr. To all these eventful and unwonted chances in the fortunes of kings, Mark Heathcote listened with deep and reverential submission to the will of Him in whose eyes crowns and sceptres are merely the more costly bawbles of the world. Like most of his contemporaries, who had sought shelter in the western continent, his political opinions, if not absolutely republican, had a leaning to liberty that was strongly in opposition to the doctrine of the divine rights of the monarch, while he had been too far removed from the stirring passions which had gradually excited those nearer to the throne, to lose their respect for its sanctity, and to sully its brightness with blood. When the transient and straggling visitors that, at long intervals, visited his settlement, spoke of the Protector, who for so many years ruled England with an iron hand, the eyes of the old man would gleam with sudden and singular interest; and once, when commenting after evening prayer on the vanity and the vicissitudes of this life, he acknowledged that the extraordinary individual, who was, in substance if not in name, seated on the throne of the Plantagenets, had been the boon companion and ungodly associate of many of his youthful hours. Then would follow a long, whole-

some, extemporaneous homily on the idleness of setting the affections on the things of life, and a half-suppressed, but still intelligible commendation of the wiser course which had led him to raise his own tabernacle in the wilderness, instead of weakening the chances of eternal glory by striving too much for the possession of the treacherous vanities of the world.

But even the gentle and ordinarily little observant Ruth might trace the kindling of the eye, the knitting of the brow, and the flushings of his pale and furrowed cheek, as the murderous conflicts of the civil wars became the themes of the ancient soldier's discourse. There were moments when religious submission, and we had almost said religious precepts, were partially forgotten, as he explained to his attentive son and listening grandchild, the nature of the onset, or the quality and dignity of the retreat. At such times, his still nervous hand would even wield the blade, in order to instruct the latter in its uses, and many a long winter evening was passed in thus indirectly teaching an art that was so much at variance with the mandates of his divine master. The chastened soldier, however, never forgot to close his instruction with a petition extraordinary, in the customary prayer, that no descendant of his should ever take life from a being unprepared to die, except in justifiable defence of his faith, his person, or his lawful rights. It must be admitted, that a liberal construction of the reserved privileges would leave sufficient matter to exercise the subtlety of one subject to any extraordinary propensity to arms.

Few opportunities were, however, offered, in their remote situation and with their peaceful habits, for the practice of a theory that had been taught in so many lessons. Indian alarms, as they were termed, were not unfrequent, but, as yet, they had never produced more than terror in the bosoms of the gentle Ruth and her young offspring. It is true, they had heard of travellers massacred, and of families separated by captivity, but, either by a happy fortune, or by more than ordinary prudence in the settlers who were established along that immediate frontier, the knife and the tomahawk had as yet been sparingly used in the colony of Connecticut. A threatening and dangerous struggle with the Dutch, in the adjoining province of New-Netherlands, had been averted by the foresight and moderation of the rulers of the new plantations; and though a warlike and powerful native chief

kept the neighboring colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island in a state of constant watchfulness, from the cause just mentioned the apprehension of danger was greatly weakened in the breasts of those so remote as the individuals who composed the family of our emigrant.

In this quiet manner did years glide by, the surrounding wilderness slowly retreating from the habitations of the Heathcotes, until they found themselves in possession of as many of the comforts of life as their utter seclusion from the rest of the world could give them reason to expect.

With this preliminary explanation we shall refer the reader to the succeeding narrative for a more minute, and we hope for a more interesting account of the incidents of a legend that may prove too homely for the tastes of those whose imaginations seek the excitement of scenes more stirring, or of a condition of life less natural.

CHAPTER II.

“Sir, I do know you ;
And dare, upon the warrant of my art,
Commend a dear thing to you.”—*King Lear*.

At the precise time when the action of our piece commences, a fine and fruitful season was drawing to a close. The harvests of hay and of the smaller corns had long been over, and the younger Heathcote, with his laborers, had passed a day in depriving the luxuriant maize of its tops, in order to secure the nutritious blades for fodder, and to admit the sun and air to harden a grain, that is almost considered the staple production of the region he inhabited. The veteran Mark had ridden among the workmen during their light toil, as well to enjoy a sight which promised abundance to his flocks and herds, as to throw in, on occasion, some wholesome spiritual precept, in which doctrinal subtlety was far more prominent than the rules of practice. The hirelings of his son, for he had long since yielded the management of the estate to Content, were, without an exception, young men born in the country, and long use and much training had accustomed them to a blending of religious exercises with most of the employments of life. They listened, therefore, with respect,

nor did an impious smile or an impatient glance escape the lightest-minded of their number during his exhortations, though the homilies of the old man were neither very brief, nor particularly original. But devotion to the one great cause of their existence, austere habits, and unrelaxed industry in keeping alive a flame of zeal that had been kindled in the other hemisphere, to burn longest and brightest in this, had interwoven the practice mentioned with most of the opinions and pleasures of these metaphysical, though simple-minded people. The toil went on none the less cheerily for the extraordinary accompaniment, and Content himself, by a certain glimmering of superstition, which appears to be the concomitant of excessive religious zeal, was fain to think that the sun shone more brightly on their labors, and that the earth gave forth more of its fruits while these holy sentiments were flowing from the lips of a father whom he piously loved and deeply revered.

But when the sun, usually at that season, in the climate of Connecticut, a bright unshrouded orb, fell towards the tree-tops which bounded the western horizon, the old man began to grow weary with his own well-doing. He therefore finished his discourse with a wholesome admonition to the youths to complete their tasks before they quitted the field; and, turning the head of his horse, he rode slowly, and with a musing air, toward the dwellings. It is probable that for some time the thoughts of Mark were occupied with the intellectual matter he had just been handling with so much power; but when his little nag stopped of itself on a small eminence, which the crooked cow-path he was following crossed, his mind yielded to the impression of more worldly and more sensible objects. As the scene that drew his contemplations from so many abstract theories to the realities of life was peculiar to the country, and is more or less connected with the subject of our tale, we shall endeavor briefly to describe it.

A small tributary of the Connecticut divided the view into two nearly equal parts. The fertile flats that extended on each of its banks for more than a mile, had been early stripped of their burden of forest, and they now lay in placid meadows, or in fields from which the grain of the season had lately disappeared, and over which the plough had already left the marks of recent tillage. The whole of the plain, which ascended gently from the rivulet toward the forest, was subdivided into inclosures by number-

less fences, constructed in the rude but substantial manner of the country. Rails, in which lightness and economy of wood had been but little consulted, lying in zigzag lines, like the approaches which the besieger makes in his cautious advance to the hostile fortress, were piled on each other, until barriers seven or eight feet in height were interposed to the inroads of vicious cattle. In one spot, a large square vacancy had been cut into the forest, and though numberless stumps of trees darkened its surface, as indeed they did many of the fields on the flats themselves, bright, green grain was sprouting forth luxuriantly from the rich and virgin soil. High against the side of an adjacent hill, that might aspire to be called a low rocky mountain, a similar invasion had been made on the domain of the trees; but caprice or convenience had induced an abandonment of the clearing, after it had ill requited the toil of felling the timber by a single crop. In this spot, straggling, girdled, and consequently dead trees, piles of logs, and black and charred stumps were seen, deforming the beauty of a field that would otherwise have been striking from its deep setting in the woods. Much of the surface of this opening, too, was now concealed by bushes, of what is termed the second growth, though here and there places appeared in which the luxuriant white clover, natural to the country, had followed the close grazing of the flocks. The eyes of Mark were bent inquiringly on this clearing, which by an air line might have been half a mile from the place where his horse had stopped, for the sounds of a dozen differently toned cow-bells were brought on the still air of the evening to his ears, from among its bushes.

The evidences of civilization were the least equivocal, however, on and around a natural elevation in the land, which arose so suddenly on the very bank of the stream as to give to it the appearance of a work of art. Whether these mounds once existed everywhere on the face of the earth, and have disappeared before long tillage and labor, we shall not presume to conjecture; but we have reason to think that they occur much more frequently in certain parts of our own country than in any other familiarly known to ordinary travellers, unless, perhaps, it may be in some of the valleys of Switzerland. The practised veteran had chosen the summit of this flattened cone for the establishment of that species of military defence which the situation of the country, and the character of the enemy he had to guard against, rendered advisable, as well as customary.

The dwelling was of wood, and constructed of the ordinary frame-work, with its thin covering of boards. It was long, low, and irregular, bearing marks of having been reared at different periods, as the wants of an increasing family had required additional accommodation. It stood near the verge of the natural declivity, and on that side of the hill where its base was washed by the rivulet, a rude piazza stretching along the whole of its front, and overhanging the stream. Several large, irregular, and clumsy chimneys rose out of different parts of the roofs, another proof that comfort rather than taste had been consulted in the disposition of the buildings. There were also two or three detached offices on the summit of the hill, placed near the dwellings, and at points most convenient for their several uses. A stranger might have remarked that they were so disposed as to form, as far as they went, the different sides of a hollow square. Notwithstanding the great length of the principal building, and the disposition of the more minute and detached parts, this desirable formation would not, however, have been obtained, if it were not that two rows of rude constructions in logs, from which the bark had not even been stripped, served to eke out the parts that had been deficient. These primeval edifices were used to contain various domestic articles, no less than provisions; they also furnished numerous lodging-rooms for the laborers and the inferior dependents of the farm. By the aid of a few strong and high gates of hewn timber those parts of the building which had not been made to unite in the original construction, were sufficiently connected to oppose so many barriers against admission into the inner court.

But the building which was most conspicuous by its position, no less than by the singularity of its construction, stood on a low, artificial mound, in the centre of the quadrangle. It was high, hexagonal in shape, and crowned with a roof that came to a point, and from whose peak rose a towering flagstaff. The foundation was of stone; but, at the height of a man above the earth, the sides were made of massive, squared logs, firmly united by an ingenious combination of their ends, as well as by perpendicular supporters pinned closely into their sides. In this citadel, or block-house, as from its materials it was technically called, there were two different tiers of long, narrow loopholes, but no regular windows. The rays of the setting sun, however, glittering on one or two small openings in

the roof, in which glass had been set, furnished evidence that the summit of the building was sometimes used for other purposes than those of defence.

About half-way up the sides of the eminence on which the building stood, was an unbroken line of high palisades, made of the bodies of young trees, firmly knitted together by braces and horizontal pieces of timber, and evidently kept in a state of jealous and complete repair. The air of the whole of this frontier fortress was neat and comfortable, and, considering that the use of artillery was unknown to those forests, not unmilitary.

At no great distance from the base of the hill, stood the barns and the stables. They were surrounded by a vast range of rude but warm sheds, beneath which sheep and horned cattle were usually sheltered from the storms of the rigorous winters of the climate. The surfaces of the meadows immediately around the out-buildings, were of a smoother and richer sward than those in the distance, and the fences were on a far more artificial, and perhaps durable, though scarcely on a more serviceable plan. A large orchard of some ten or fifteen years' growth, too, added greatly to the air of improvement, which put this smiling valley in such strong and pleasing contrast to the endless and nearly untenanted woods by which it was environed.

Of the interminable forest, it is not necessary to speak. With the solitary exception on the mountain-side, and of here and there a windrow, along which the trees had been uprooted by the furious blasts which sometimes sweep off acres of our trees in a minute, the eye could find no other object to study in the vast setting of this quiet rural picture but the seemingly endless maze of wilderness. The broken surface of the land, however, limited the view to a horizon of no great extent, though the art of man could scarcely devise colors so vivid or so gay as those which were afforded by the brilliant hues of the foliage. The keen, biting frosts, known at the close of a New England autumn, had already touched the broad and fringed leaves of the maples, and the sudden and secret process had been wrought upon all the other varieties of the forest, producing that magical effect which can be nowhere seen except in regions in which nature is so bountiful and luxuriant in summer, and so sudden and so stern in the change of the seasons.

Over this picture of prosperity and peace, the eye of old Mark Heathcote wandered with a keen degree of worldly

prudence. The melancholy sounds of the various toned bells, ringing hollow and plaintively among the arches of the woods, gave him reason to believe that the herds of the family were returning voluntarily from their unlimited forest pasturage. His grandson, a fine, spirited boy of some fourteen years, was approaching through the fields. The youngster drove before him a small flock, which domestic necessity compelled the family to keep at great occasional loss, and a heavy expense of time and trouble; both of which could alone protect them from the ravages of the beasts of prey. A species of half-witted serving-lad, whom charity had induced the old man to harbor among his dependents, was seen issuing from the woods, nearly in a line with the neglected clearing on the mountain-side. The latter advanced, shouting and urging before him a drove of colts, as shaggy, as wayward, and nearly as untamed as himself.

"How now, weak one," said the Puritan, with a severe eye, as the two lads approached him with their several charges from different directions, and nearly at the same instant; "how now, sirrah! dost worry the cattle in this gait when the eyes of the prudent are turned from thee? Do as thou wouldst be done by, is a just and healthful admonition, that the learned and the simple, the weak and the strong of mind, should alike recall to their thoughts and their practice. I do not know that an over-driven colt will be at all more apt to make a gentle and useful beast in its prime, than one treated with kindness and care."

"I believe the evil one has got into all the kine, no less than into the foals," sullenly returned the lad; "I've called to them in anger, and I've spoken to them as if they had been my natural kin, and yet neither fair word nor foul tongue will bring them to hearken to advice. There is something frightful in the woods this very sundown, master; or colts that I have driven the summer through, would not be apt to give this unfair treatment to one they ought to know to be their friend."

"Thy sheep are counted, Mark?" resumed the grandfather, turning toward his descendant with a less austere, but always an authoritative brow; "thy mother hath need of every fleece to provide covering for thee and others like thee; thou knowest, child, that the creatures are few, and our winters weary and cold."

"My mother's loom shall never be idle from carelessness of mine," returned the confident boy; "but counting and

wishing cannot make seven-and-thirty fleeces, where there are only six-and-thirty backs to carry them. I have been an hour among the briers and bushes of the hill logging, looking for the lost wether, and yet neither lock, hoof, hide, nor horn, is there to say what hath befallen the animal."

"Thou hast lost a sheep! this carelessness will cause thy mother to grieve."

"Grandfather, I have been no idler. Since the last hunt, the flock hath been allowed to browse the woods; for no man, in all that week, saw wolf, panther, or bear, though the country was up, from the great river to the outer settlements of the colony. The biggest four-footed animal that lost its hide in the muster was a thin-ribbed deer; and the stoutest battle given, was between wild Whittal Ring, here, and a woodchuck that kept him at arm's-length for the better part of an afternoon."

"The tale may be true, but it neither finds that which is lost, nor completeth the number of thy mother's flock. Hast thou ridden carefully throughout the clearing? It is not long since I saw the animal grazing in that quarter. What hast thou twisting in thy fingers, in that wasteful and unthankful manner, Whittal?"

"What would make a winter blanket, if there was enough of it! wool! and wool, too, that came from the thigh of old Straight-Horns; else have I forgotten a leg that gives the longest and coarsest hair at the shearing."

"That truly seemeth a lock from the animal that is wanting," exclaimed the other boy. "There is no other creature in the flock with fleece so coarse and shaggy. Where found you the handful, Whittal Ring?"

"Growing on the branch of a thorn. Queer fruit this, masters, to be seen where young plums ought to ripen!"

"Go, go," interrupted the old man; "thou idlest, and misspendest the time in vain talk. Go, fold thy flock, Mark; and do thou, weak one, house thy charge with less uproar than is wont. We should remember that the voice is given to man, firstly, that he may improve the blessing in thanksgivings and petitions; secondly, to communicate such gifts as may be imparted to himself, and which it is his bounden duty to attempt to impart to others; and then, thirdly, to declare his natural wants and inclinations."

With this admonition, which probably proceeded from a

secret consciousness in the Puritan that he had permitted a momentary cloud of selfishness to obscure the brightness of his faith, the party separated. The grandson and the hireling took their several ways to the folds, while old Mark himself slowly continued his course toward the dwellings. It was near enough to the hours of darkness to render the preparations we have mentioned prudent still, no urgency called for particular haste, in the return of the veteran to the shelter and protection of his own comfortable and secure abode. He therefore loitered along the path, occasionally stopping to look into the prospects of the young crops that were beginning to spring up in readiness for the coming year, and at times bending his gaze around the whole of his limited horizon, like one who had the habit of exceeding and unremitted care.

One of these numerous pauses promised to be much longer than usual. Instead of keeping his understanding eye on the grain, the look of the old man appeared fastened, as by a charm, on some distant and obscure object. Doubt and uncertainty, for many minutes, seemed to mingle in his gaze. But all hesitation had apparently disappeared, as his lips severed, and he spoke, perhaps unconsciously to himself, aloud.

"It is no deception," were the low words, "but a living and an accountable creature of the Lord's. Many a day has passed since such a sight hath been witnessed in this vale; but my eye greatly deceives me, or yonder cometh one ready to ask for hospitality, and, peradventure, for Christian and brotherly communion."

The sight of the aged emigrant had not deceived him. One, who appeared a wayworn and weary traveller, had indeed ridden out of the forest, at a point where a path, that was easier to be traced by the blazed trees that lay along its route than by any marks on the earth itself, issued into the cleared land. The progress of the stranger had at first been so wary and slow, as to bear the manner of exceeding and mysterious caution. The blind road, along which he must have ridden not only far but hard, or night had certainly overtaken him in the woods, led to one of the distant settlements that lay near to the fertile banks of the Connecticut. Few ever followed its windings but they who had especial affairs, or extraordinary communion in the way of religious friendships, with the proprietors of the Wish-Ton-Wish, as, in commemoration

of the first bird that had been seen by the emigrants, the valley of the Heathcotes was called.

Once fairly in view, any doubt or apprehension that the stranger might at first have entertained, disappeared. He rode boldly and steadily forward, until he drew a rein that his impoverished and weary beast gladly obeyed within a few feet of the proprietor of the valley, whose gaze had never ceased to watch his movements, from the instant when the other first came within view. Before speaking, the stranger, a man whose head was getting gray, apparently as much with hardship as with time, and one whose great weight would have proved a grievous burden, in a long ride, to even a better-conditioned beast than the ill-favored provincial hack he had ridden, dismounted, and threw the bridle loose upon the drooping neck of the animal. The latter, without a moment's delay, and with a greediness that denoted long abstinence, profited by its liberty, to crop the herbage where it stood.

"I cannot be mistaken, when I suppose that I have at length reached the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish," the visitor said, touching a soiled and slouched beaver that more than half concealed his features. The question was put in an English that bespoke a descent from those who dwell in the midland counties of the mother country, rather than in that intonation which is still to be traced, equally in the western portions of England and in the eastern states of the Union. Notwithstanding the purity of his accent, there was enough in the form of his speech to denote a severe compliance with the fashion of the religionists of the times. He used that measured and methodical tone, which was, singularly enough, believed to distinguish an entire absence of affectation in language.

"Thou hast reached the dwelling of him thou seekest; one who is a submissive sojourner in the wilderness of the world, and an humble servitor in the outer temple."

"This then is Mark Heathcote!" repeated the stranger in tones of interest, regarding the other with a look of long, and, possibly, of suspicious investigation.

"Such is the name I bear. A fitting confidence in Him who knows so well how to change the wilds into the haunts of men, and much suffering, have made me the master of what thou seest. Whether thou comest to tarry a night, a week, a month, or even for a still longer season, as a brother in care, and I doubt not one who striveth for the right, I bid thee welcome."

The stranger thanked his host by a slow inclination of the head ; but the gaze, which began to partake a little of the look of recognition, was still too earnest and engrossing to admit of verbal reply. On the other hand, though the old man had scanned the broad and rusty beaver, the coarse and well-worn doublet, the heavy boots, and, in short, the whole attire of his visitor, in which he saw no vain conformity to idle fashions to condemn, it was evident that personal recollection had not the smallest influence in quickening his hospitality.

"Thou hast arrived happily," continued the Puritan ; "had night overtaken thee in the forest, unless much practised in the shifts of our young woodsmen, hunger, frost, and a supperless bed of brush, would have given thee motive to think more of the body than is either profitable or seemly."

The stranger might possibly have known the embarrassment of these several hardships ; for the quick and unconscious glance he threw over his soiled dress should have betrayed some familiarity, already, with the privations to which his host alluded. As neither of them, however, seemed disposed to waste further time on matters of such light moment, the traveller put an arm through the bridle of his horse, and, in obedience to an invitation from the owner of the dwelling, they took their way toward the fortified edifice on the natural mound.

The task of furnishing litter and provender to the jaded beast was performed by Whittal Ring, under the inspection, and at times under the instructions, of its owner and his host, both of whom appeared to take a kind and commendable interest in the comfort of a faithful hack, that had evidently suffered long and much in the service of its master. When this duty was discharged, the old man and his unknown guest entered the house together ; the frank and unpretending hospitality of a country like that they were in, rendering suspicion or hesitation qualities that were unknown to the reception of a man of white blood ; more especially if he spoke the language of the island, which was then first sending out its swarms to subdue and possess so large a portion of a continent that nearly divides the earth in moieties.

CHAPTER III.

“This is most strange ; your father’s in some passion
That works him strongly.”—*Tempest*.

A FEW hours made a great change in the occupations of the different members of our simple and secluded family. The kine had yielded their nightly tribute ; the oxen had been released from the yoke, and were now secure beneath their sheds ; the sheep were in their folds, safe from the assaults of the prowling wolf ; and care had been taken to see that everything possessing life was gathered within the particular defences that were provided for its security and comfort. But while all this caution was used in behalf of living things, the utmost indifference prevailed on the subject of that species of movable property which elsewhere would have been guarded with at least an equal jealousy. The homely fabrics of the looms of Ruth lay on their bleaching-ground, to drink in the night-dew ; and ploughs, harrows, carts, saddles, and other similar articles, were left in situations so exposed as to prove that the hand of man had occupations so numerous and so urgent as to render it inconvenient to bestow labor where it was not considered absolutely necessary.

Content himself was the last to quit the fields and the out-buildings. When he reached the postern in the palisades, he stopped to call to those above him, in order to learn if any yet lingered without the wooden barriers. The answer being in the negative, he entered, and drawing-to the small but heavy gate, he secured it with bar, bolt, and lock, carefully and jealously ; with his own hand. As this was no more than a nightly and necessary precaution, the affairs of the family received no interruption. The meal of the hour was soon ended ; and conversation, with those light toils which are peculiar to the long evenings of the fall and winter in families on the frontier, succeeded as fitting employments to close the business of a laborious and well spent day.

Notwithstanding the entire simplicity which marked the opinions and usages of the colonists at that period, and the great equality of condition which even to this hour distinguishes the particular community of which we write, choice and inclination drew some natural distinctions in the ordi-

nary intercourse of the inmates of the Heathcote family. A fire so bright and cheerful blazed on an enormous hearth in a sort of upper kitchen, as to render candles or torches unnecessary. Around it were seated six or seven hardy and athletic young men, some drawing coarse tools carefully through the curvatures of ox-bows, others scraping down the helves of axes, or perhaps fashioning sticks of birch into homely but convenient brooms. A demure, side-looking young woman kept her great wheel in motion, while one or two others were passing from room to room, with the notable and stirring industry of handmaidens busied in the more familiar cares of the household. A door communicated with an inner and superior apartment. Here was a smaller but an equally cheerful fire, a floor which had recently been swept, while that without had been freshly sprinkled with river sand; candles of tallow, on a table of cherry-wood from the neighboring forest; walls that were wainscoted in the black oak of the country, and a few other articles of a fashion so antique, and of ornaments so ingenious and rich, as to announce that they had been transported from beyond sea. Above the mantle were suspended the armorial bearings of the Heathcotes and the Hardings, elaborately emblazoned in tent-stitch.

The principal personages of the family were seated around the latter hearth, while a straggler from the other room of more than usual curiosity had placed himself among them, marking the distinction in ranks, or rather in situation, merely by the extraordinary care which he took that none of the scrapings should litter the spotless oaken floor.

Until this period of the evening, the duties of hospitality and the observances of religion had prevented familiar discourse. But the offices of the housewife were now ended for the night, the handmaidens had all retired to their wheels, and, as the bustle of a busy and more stirring domestic industry ceased, the cold and self-restrained silence which had hitherto only been broken by distant and brief observations of courtesy, or by some wholesome allusion to the lost and probationary condition of man, seemed to invite an intercourse of a more general character.

"You entered my clearing by the southern path," commenced Mark Heathcote, addressing himself to his guest with sufficient courtesy, "and needs must bring tidings from the towns on the river side. Has aught been done by our councillors at home, in the matter that pertaineth so closely to the well-being of this colony?"

"You would have me say whether he that now sitteth on the throne of England hath listened to the petitions of his people in this province, and hath granted them protection against the abuses which might so readily flow out of his own ill-advised will, or out of the violence and injustice of his successors?"

"We will render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and speak reverently of men having authority. I would fain know whether the agent sent by our people hath gained the ears of those who counsel the prince, and obtained that which he sought?"

"He hath done more," returned the stranger, with singular asperity; "he hath even gained the ear of the Lord's Anointed."

"Then is Charles of better mind and of stronger justice than report hath spoken. We were told that light manners and unprofitable companions had led him to think more of the vanities of the world and less of the wants of those over whom he hath been called by Providence to rule, than is meet for one that sitteth on a high place. I rejoice that the arguments of the man we sent have prevailed over more evil promptings, and that peace and freedom of conscience are likely to be the fruits of the undertaking. In what manner hath he seen fit to order the future government of this people?"

"Much as it hath ever stood—by their own ordinances. Winthrop hath returned, and is the bearer of a Royal Charter which granteth all the rights long claimed and practised. None now dwell under the Crown of Britain with fewer offensive demands on their consciences, or with lighter calls on their political duties, than the men of Connecticut."

"It is fitting that thanks should be rendered therefor where thanks are most due," said the Puritan, folding his hands on his bosom, and sitting for a moment with closed eyes, like one who communed with an unseen being. "Is it known by what manner of argument the Lord moved the heart of the Prince to hearken to our wants; or was it an open and manifest token of his power?"

"I think it must needs have been the latter," rejoined the visitor, with a manner that grew still more caustic and emphatic. "The bawble, that was the visible agent, could not have weighed greatly with one so proudly seated before the eyes of men."

Until this point in the discourse, Content and Ruth,

with their offspring, and two or three other individuals who composed the audience, had listened with the demure gravity which characterized the manners of the country. The language, united with the ill-concealed sarcasm conveyed by the countenance, no less than the emphasis of the speaker, caused them now to raise their eyes, as by a common impulse. The word "bawble" was audibly and curiously repeated. But the look of cold irony had already passed from the features of the stranger, and it had given place to a stern and fixed austerity that imparted a character of grimness to his hard and sunburnt visage. Still he betrayed no disposition to shrink from the subject; but, after regarding his auditors with a glance in which pride and suspicion were strongly blended, he resumed the discourse.

"It is known," he added, "that the grandfather of him the good people of these settlements have commissioned to bear their wants over sea, lived in the favor of the man who last sat upon the throne of England; and a rumor goeth forth, that the Stuart, in a moment of princely condescension, once decked the finger of his subject with a ring wrought in a curious fashion. It was a token of the love which a monarch may bear a man."

"Such gifts are beacons of friendship, but may not be used as gay and sinful ornaments," observed Mark, while the other paused like one who wished none of the bitterness of his allusions to be lost.

"It matters not whether the bawble lay in the coffers of the Winthrops, or has long been glittering before the eyes of the faithful, in the Bay, since it hath finally proved to be a jewel of price," continued the stranger. "It is said in secret that this ring hath returned to the finger of a Stuart, and it is openly proclaimed that Connecticut hath a Charter!"

Content and his wife regarded each other in melancholy amazement. Such an evidence of wanton levity and of unworthiness of motive, in one who was intrusted with the gift of earthly government, pained their simple and upright minds, while old Mark, of still more decided and exaggerated ideas of spiritual perfection, distinctly groaned aloud. The stranger took a sensible pleasure in this testimony of their abhorrence of so gross and so unworthy a venality, though he saw no occasion to heighten its effect by further speech. When his host stood erect, and in a voice that was accustomed to obedience called on his fam-

ily to join, in behalf of the reckless ruler of the land of their fathers, in a petition to Him who alone could soften the hearts of princes, he also arose from his seat. But even in this act of devotion, the stranger bore the air of one who wished to do pleasure to his entertainers, rather than to obtain that which was asked.

The prayer, though short, was pointed, fervent, and sufficiently personal. The wheels in the outer room ceased their hum, and a general movement denoted that all there had arisen to join in the office; while one or two of their number, impelled by deeper piety or stronger interest, drew near to the open door between the rooms, in order to listen. With this singular but characteristic interruption, that particular branch of the discourse, which had given rise to it, altogether ceased.

"And have we reason to dread a rising of the savages on the borders?" asked Content, when he found that the moved spirit of his father was not yet sufficiently calmed to return to the examination of temporal things; "one who brought wares from the towns below, a few months since, recited reasons to fear a movement among the red men."

The subject had not sufficient interest to open the ears of the stranger. He was deaf, or he chose to affect deafness, to the interrogatory. Laying his two large and weather-worn, though still muscular hands, on a visage that was much darkened by exposure, he appeared to shut out the objects of the world, while he communed deeply, and, as would seem by a slight tremor, that shook even his powerful frame, terribly, with his own thoughts.

"We have many to whom our hearts strongly cling, to heighten the smallest symptom of alarm from that quarter," added the tender and anxious mother, her eye glancing at the uplifted countenances of two little girls, who, busied with their light needle-work, sat on stools at her feet. "But I rejoice to see that one, who hath journeyed from parts where the minds of the savages must be better understood, hath not feared to do it unarmed."

The traveller slowly uncovered his features, and the glance that his eye shot over the face of the last speaker was not without a gentle and interested expression. Instantly recovering his composure, he arose, and, turning to the double leathern sack, which had been borne on the crupper of his nag, and which now lay at no great distance from his seat, he drew a pair of horseman's pistols from

two well contrived pockets in its sides, and laid them deliberately on the table.

"Though little disposed to seek an encounter with any bearing the image of man," he said, "I have not neglected the usual precautions of those who enter the wilderness. Here are weapons that, in steady hands, might easily take life, or, at need, preserve it."

The young Mark drew near with boyish curiosity, and while one finger ventured to touch a lock, as he stole a conscious glance of wrong-doing towards his mother, he said, with as much of contempt in his air as the schooling of his manners would allow—

"An Indian arrow would make a surer aim than a bore as short as this! When the trainer from the Hartford town struck the wild-cat on the hill clearing, he sent the bullet from a five-foot barrel; besides, this short-sighted gun would be a dull weapon in a hug against the keen-edged knife that the wicked Wampanoag is known to carry."

"Boy, thy years are few, and thy boldness of speech marvellous," sternly interrupted his parent in the second degree.

The stranger manifested no displeasure at the confident language of the lad. Encouraging him with a look, which plainly proclaimed that martial qualities in no degree lessened the stripling in his favor, he observed that—

"The youth who is not afraid to think of the fight, or to reason on its chances, will lead to a manhood of spirit and independence. A hundred thousand striplings like this might have spared Winthrop his jewel, and the Stuart the shame of yielding to so vain and so trivial a bribe. But thou mayst also see, child, that had we come to the death-hug, the wicked Wampanoag might have found a blade as keen as his own."

The stranger, while speaking, loosened a few strings of his doublet, and thrust a hand into his bosom. The action enabled more than one eye to catch a momentary glimpse of a weapon of the same description, but of a size much smaller than those he had already so freely exhibited. As he immediately withdrew the member, and again closed the garment with studied care, no one presumed to advert to the circumstance, but all turned their attention to the long sharp hunting knife that he deposited by the side of the pistols, as he concluded. Mark ventured to open its blade, but he turned away with sudden consciousness, when he found that a few fibres of coarse, shaggy wool,

that were drawn from the loosened joint, adhered to his fingers.

"Straight-Horns has been against a bush sharper than the thorn!" exclaimed Whittal Ring, who had been at hand, and who watched with childish admiration the smallest proceedings of the different individuals. "A steel for the back of the blade, a few dried leaves and broken sticks, with such a carver, would soon make roast and broiled of the old bell-wether himself. I know that the hair of all my colts is sorrel, and I counted five at sundown, which is just as many as went loping through the underbrush when I loosened them from the hobbles in the morning; but six-and-thirty backs can never carry seven-and-thirty growing fleeces of unsheared wool. Master knows that, for he is a scholar and can count a hundred!"

The allusion to the fate of the lost sheep was so plain, as to admit of no interpretation of the meaning of the witless speaker. Animals of that class were of the last importance to the comforts of the settlers, and there was not probably one within hearing of Whittal Ring that was at all ignorant of the import of his words. Indeed, the loud chuckle and the open and deriding manner with which the lad himself held above his head the hairy fibres that he had snatched from young Mark, allowed of no concealment had it been desirable.

"This feeble-gifted youth would hint that thy knife hath proved its edge on a wether that is missing from our flock, since the animals went on their mountain range in the morning," said the host, calmly; though even he bent his eye to the floor, as he waited for an answer to a remark, direct as the one his sense of justice, and his indomitable love of right, had prompted.

The stranger demanded, in a voice that lost none of its depth or firmness, "Is hunger a crime, that they who dwell so far from the haunts of selfishness visit it with their anger?"

"The foot of Christian man never approached the gates of Wish-Ton-Wish to be turned away in uncharitableness, but that which is freely given should not be taken in licentiousness. From off the hill where my flock is wont to graze it is easy, through many an opening of the forest, to see these roofs; and it would have been better that the body should languish, than that a grievous sin should be placed on that immortal spirit which is already too deeply laden, unless thou art far more happy than others of the fallen race of Adam."

"Mark Heathcote," said the accused, and ever with an unwavering tone, "look further at those weapons, which, if a guilty man, I have weakly placed within thy power. Thou wilt find more there to wonder at than a few straggling hairs that the spinner would cast from her as too coarse for service."

"It is long since I found pleasure in handling the weapons of strife; may it be longer to the time when they shall be needed in this abode of peace. These are instruments of death, resembling those used in my youth, by cavaliers that rode in the levies of the first Charles and of his pusillanimous father. There was worldly pride and great vanity, with much and damning ungodliness in the wars that I have seen, my children; and yet the carnal man found pleasure in the stirrings of those graceless days! Come hither, younker; thou hast often sought to know the manner in which the horsemen are wont to lead into the combat, when the broad-mouthed artillery and pattering leaden hail have cleared a passage for the struggle of horse to horse, and man to man. Much of the justification of these combats must depend on the inward spirit, and on the temper of him that striketh at the life of a fellow-sinner; but righteous Joshua, it is known, contended with the heathen throughout a supernatural day; and, therefore, always humbly confiding that our cause is just, I will open to thy young mind the uses of a weapon that hath never before been seen in these forests."

"I have hefted many a heavier piece than this," said young Mark, frowning equally with the exertion and with the instigations of his aspiring spirit, as he held out the ponderous weapon in a single hand; "we have guns that might tame a wolf with greater certainty than any barrel of a bore less than my own height. Tell me, grand'ther; at what distance do the mounted warriors you so often name take their sight?"

But the power of speech appeared suddenly to have deserted the aged veteran. He had interrupted his own discourse, and now, instead of answering the interrogatory of the boy, his eye wandered slowly and with a look of painful doubt from the weapon, that he still held before him, to the countenance of the stranger. The latter continued erect, like one courting a strict and meaning examination of his person. This dumb-show could not fail to attract the observation of Content. Rising from his seat, with that quiet but authoritative manner which is still seen

in the domestic government of the people of the region where he dwelt, he beckoned to all present to quit the apartment. Ruth and her daughters, the hirelings, the ill-gifted Whittal, and even the reluctant Mark, preceded him to the door, which he closed with respectful care ; and then the whole of the wondering party mingled with those of the outer room, leaving the one they had quitted to the sole possession of the aged chief of the settlement, and to his still unknown and mysterious guest.

Many anxious, and to those who were excluded, seemingly interminable minutes passed, and the secret interview appeared to draw no nearer its close. That deep reverence which the years, paternity, and character of the grandfather had inspired, prevented all from approaching the quarter of the apartment nearest the room they had left ; but a silence, still as the grave, did all that silence could do to enlighten their minds in a matter of so much general interest. The deep, smothered sentences of the speakers were often heard, each dwelling with steadiness and propriety on his particular theme, but no sound that conveyed meaning to the minds of those without passed the envious walls. At length, the voice of old Mark became more than usually audible ; and then Content arose, with a gesture to those around him to imitate his example. The young men threw aside the subjects of their light employments, the maidens left the wheels which had not been turned for many minutes, and the whole party disposed themselves in the decent and simple attitude of prayer. For the third time that evening was the voice of the Puritan heard, pouring out his spirit in a communion with that Being on whom it was his practice to repose all his worldly cares. But though long accustomed to all the peculiar forms of utterance, by which their father ordinarily expressed his pious emotions, neither Content nor his attentive partner was enabled to decide on the nature of the feeling that was now uppermost. At times it appeared to be the language of thanksgiving, and at others it assumed more of the imploring sounds of deprecation and petition ; in short, it was so varied, and, though tranquil, so equivocal, if such a term may be applied to so serious a subject, as completely to baffle every conjecture.

Long and weary minutes passed after the voice had entirely ceased, and yet no summons was given to the expecting family, nor did any sound proceed from the inner room which the respectful son was emboldened to construe into

evidence that he might presume to enter. At length apprehension began to mingle with conjectures, and then the husband and wife communed apart, in whispers. The misgivings and doubt of the former soon manifested themselves in still more apparent forms. He arose, and was seen pacing the wide apartment, gradually approaching nearer to the partition which separated the two rooms, evidently prepared to retire beyond the limits of hearing, the moment he should detect any proofs that his uneasiness was without a sufficient cause. Still no sound proceeded from the inner room. The breathless silence which had so shortly before reigned where he was, appeared to be suddenly transferred to the spot in which he was vainly endeavoring to detect the smallest proof of human existence. Again he returned to Ruth, and again they consulted in low voices, as to the step that filial duty seemed to require at their hands.

"We were not bidden to withdraw," said his gentle companion; "why not rejoin our parent, now that time has been given to understand the subject which so evidently disturbed his mind?"

Content, at length, yielded to this opinion. With that cautious discretion which distinguishes his people, he motioned to the family to follow, in order that no unnecessary exclusion should give rise to conjectures or excite suspicions, of which, after all, the circumstances might prove no justification. Notwithstanding the subdued manners of the age and country, curiosity, and perhaps a better feeling, had become so intense, as to cause all present to obey this silent mandate, by moving as swiftly towards the open door as a never-yielding decency of demeanor would permit.

Old Mark Heathcote occupied the chair in which he had been left, with that calm and unbending gravity of eye and features which were then thought indispensable to a fitting sobriety of spirit. But the stranger had disappeared. There were two or three outlets by which the room, and even the house might be quitted, without the knowledge of those who had so long waited for admission; and the first impression led the family to expect the reappearance of the absent man through one of these exterior passages. Content, however, read in the expression of his father's eye that the moment of confidence, if it were ever to arrive, had not yet come; and so admirable and perfect was the domestic discipline of this family, that the questions which

the son did not see fit to propound, no one of inferior condition, or lesser age, might presume to agitate. With the person of the stranger, every evidence of his recent visit had also vanished.

Mark missed the weapon that had excited his admiration; Whittal looked in vain for the hunting-knife, which had betrayed the fate of the wether; Mrs. Heathcote saw by a hasty glance of the eye, that the leathern sacks, which she had borne in mind ought to be transferred to the sleeping apartment of their guest, were gone; and a mild and playful image of herself, who bore her name no less than most of those features which had rendered her own youth more than usually attractive, sought without success, a massive silver spur, of curious and antique workmanship, which she had been permitted to handle until the moment when the family had been commanded to withdraw.

The night had now worn later than the hour at which it was usual for people of habits so simple to be out of their beds. The grandfather lighted a taper, and, after bestowing the usual blessing on those around him, with an air as calm as if nothing had occurred, he prepared to retire into his own room. And yet, matter of interest seemed to linger on his mind. Even on the threshold of the door, he turned, and, for an instant, all expected some explanation of a circumstance which began to wear no little of the aspect of an exciting and painful mystery. But their hopes were raised only to be disappointed.

"My thoughts have not kept the passage of the time," he said. "In what hour of the night are we, my son?"

He was told that it was already past the usual moment of sleep.

"No matter; that which Providence hath bestowed for our comfort and support should not be lightly and unthankfully disregarded. Take thou the beast I am wont to ride, thyself, Content, and follow the path which leadeth to the mountain clearing; bring away that which shall meet thine eye, near the first turning of the route towards the river towns. We have got into the last quarter of the year, and in order that our industry may not flag, and that all may be stirring with the sun, let the remainder of the household seek their rest."

Content saw, by the manner of his father, that no departure from the strict letter of these instructions was admissible. He closed the door after his retiring form, and then, by a quiet gesture of authority, indicated to his de-

pendents that they were expected to withdraw. The maidens of Ruth led the children to their chambers, and in a few more minutes none remained in the outer apartment, already so often named, but the obedient son, with his anxious and affectionate consort.

"I will be thy companion, husband," Ruth half-whisperingly commenced, so soon as the little domestic preparations for leaving the fires and securing the doors were ended. "I like not that thou should'st go into the forest alone, at so late an hour of the night."

"One will be with me, there, who never deserteth those who rely on his protection. Besides, my Ruth, what is there to apprehend in a wilderness like this? The beasts have been lately hunted from the hills, and excepting those who dwell under our own roof, there is not one within a long day's ride."

"We know not! Where is the stranger that came within our doors as the sun was setting?"

"As thou sayest, we know not. My father is not minded to open his lips on the subject of this traveller, and surely we are not now to learn the lessons of obedience and self-denial."

"It would, notwithstanding, be a great easing to the spirit to hear at least the name of him who hath eaten of our bread, and joined in our family worship, though he were immediately to pass away forever from before the sight."

"That may he have done, already!" returned the less curious and more self-restrained husband. "My father wills not that we inquire."

"And yet there can be little sin in knowing the condition of one whose fortunes and movements can excite neither our envy nor our strife. I would that we had tarried for a closer mingling in the prayers; it was not seemly to desert a guest, who, it would appear, had need of an especial up-offering in his behalf."

"Our spirits joined in the asking, though our ears were shut to the matter of his wants. But it will be needful that I should be afoot with the young men, in the morning, and a mile of measurement would not reach to the turning, in the path to the river towns. Go with me to the postern, and look to the fastenings; I will not keep thee long on thy watch."

Content and his wife now quitted the dwelling, by the only door that was left unbarred. Lighted by a moon that

was full, though clouded, they passed a gateway between two of the outer buildings, and descended to the palisades. The bars and bolts of the little postern were removed, and in a few minutes, the former, mounted on the back of his father's own horse, was galloping briskly along the path which led into the part of the forest he was directed to seek.

While the husband was thus proceeding, in obedience to orders that he never hesitated to obey, his faithful wife withdrew within the shelter of the wooden defences. More in compliance with a precaution that was become habitual, than from any present causes of suspicion, she drew a single bolt and remained at the postern, anxiously awaiting the result of a movement that was as unaccountable as it was extraordinary.

CHAPTER IV.

“’T the name of something holy, sir, why stand you
In this strange stare?”—*Tempest*.

As a girl, Ruth Harding had been one of the mildest and gentlest of the human race. Though new impulses had been given to her naturally kind affections by the attachments of a wife and mother, her dispositions suffered no change by marriage. Obedient, disinterested, and devoted to those she loved, as her parents had known her, so, by the experience of many years, had she proved to Content. In the midst of the utmost equanimity of temper and of deportment, her watchful solicitude in behalf of the few who formed the limited circle of her existence, never slumbered. It dwelt unpretendingly but active in her gentle bosom, like a great and moving principle of life. Though circumstances had placed her on a remote and exposed frontier, where time had not been given for the several customary divisions of employments, she was unchanged in habits, in feelings, and in character. The affluence of her husband had elevated her above the necessity of burdensome toil; and, while she had encountered the dangers of the wilderness, and neglected none of the duties of her active station, she had escaped most of those injurious consequences which are a little apt to impair the peculiar loveliness of women. Notwithstanding the exposure of a border life, she remained feminine, attractive, and singularly youthful.

The reader will readily imagine the state of mind with which such a being watched the distant form of a husband, engaged in a duty like that we have described. Notwithstanding the influence of long habit, the forest was rarely approached after night-fall by the boldest woodsman, without some secret consciousness that he encountered a positive danger. It was the hour when its roaming and hungry tenants were known to be most in motion ; and the rustling of a leaf or the snapping of a dried twig beneath the light tread of the smallest animal, was apt to conjure up images of the voracious and fire-eyed panther, or perhaps of a lurking biped, which, though more artful, was known to be scarcely less savage. It is true, that hundreds experienced the uneasiness of such sensations who were never fated to undergo the realities of the fearful pictures. Still facts were not wanting to supply sufficient motive for a grave and reasonable apprehension.

Histories of combats with beasts of prey, and of massacres by roving and lawless Indians, were the moving legends of the border. Thrones might be subverted and kingdoms lost and won in distant Europe, and less would be said of the events by those who dwelt in these woods, than of one scene of peculiar and striking forest incident that called for the exercise of the stout courage and keen intelligence of a settler. Such a tale passed from mouth to mouth with the eagerness of powerful personal interest, and many were already transmitted from parent to child, in the form of tradition, until, as in more artificial communities graver improbabilities creep into the doubtful pages of history, exaggeration became too closely blended with truth ever again to be separated.

Under the influence of these feelings, and perhaps prompted by his never-failing discretion, Content had thrown a well-trying piece over his shoulder ; and when he rose the ascent on which his father had met the stranger, Ruth caught a glimpse of his form, bending on the neck of his horse, and gliding through the misty light of the hour, resembling one of those fancied images of wayward and hard-riding sprites, of which the tales of the eastern continent are so fond of speaking.

Then followed anxious moments, during which neither sight nor hearing could in the least aid the conjectures of the attentive wife. She listened without breathing, and once or twice she thought the blows of hoofs falling on the earth harder and quicker than common, might be distin-

guished ; but it was only as Content mounted the sudden ascent of the hill-side that he was again seen, for a brief instant, while dashing swiftly into the cover of the woods.

Though Ruth had been familiar with the cares of the frontier, perhaps she had never known a moment more intensely painful than that when the form of her husband became blended with the dark trunks of the trees. The time was to her impatience longer than usual, and under the excitement of a feverish inquietude that had no definite object, she removed the single bolt that held the postern closed, and passed entirely without the stockade. To her oppressed senses the palisadoes appeared to place limits to her vision. Still weary minute passed after minute, without bringing relief. During these anxious moments she became more than usually conscious of the insulated situation in which he and all who were dearest to her heart were placed. The feelings of a wife prevailed. Quitting the side of the acclivity, she began to walk slowly along the path her husband had taken, until apprehension insensibly urged her into a quicker movement. She had paused only when she stood nearly in the centre of the clearing, on the eminence where her father had halted that evening to contemplate the growing improvement of his estate.

Here her steps were suddenly arrested, for she thought a form was issuing from the forest, at that interesting spot which her eye had never ceased to watch. It proved to be no more than the passing shadow of a cloud, denser than common, which threw the body of its darkness on the trees and a portion of its outline on the ground near the margin of the wood. Just at this instant the recollection that she had incautiously left the postern open, flashed upon her mind, and, with feelings divided between husband and children, she commenced her return, in order to repair a neglect, to which habit, no less than prudence, imparted a high degree of culpability. The eyes of the mother, for the feelings of that sacred character were now powerfully uppermost, were fastened on the ground, as she eagerly picked her way along the uneven surface ; and so engrossed was her mind by the omission of duty, with which she was severely reproaching herself, that they drank in objects without conveying distinct or intelligible images to her brain.

Notwithstanding the one engrossing thought of the moment, something met her eye that caused even the vacant organ to recoil, and every fibre in her frame to tremble

with terror. There was a moment in which delirium nearly heightened terror to madness." Reflection came only when Ruth had reached the distance of many feet from the spot where this startling object had half unconsciously crossed her vision. Then for a single and a fearful instant she paused, like one who debated on the course she ought to follow. Maternal love prevailed, and the deer of her own woods scarcely bounds with great agility than the mother of the sleeping and defenceless family now fled toward the dwellings. Panting and breathless she gained the postern, which was closed with hands that performed office more by instinct than in obedience to thought, and doubly and trebly barred.

For the first time in some minutes Ruth now breathed distinctly and without pain. She strove to rally her thoughts, in order to deliberate on the course that prudence and her duty to Content, who was still exposed to the danger she had herself escaped, prescribed. Her first impulse was to give the established signal that was to recall the laborers from the field, or to awake the sleepers, in the event of an alarm; but better reflection told her that such a step might prove fatal to him who balanced in her affections against the rest of the world. The struggle in her mind only ended as she clearly and unequivocally caught a view of her husband, issuing from the forest at the very point where he had entered. The return path, unfortunately, led directly past the spot where such sudden terror had seized her mind. She would have given worlds to have known how to apprise him of a danger with which her own imagination was full, without communicating the warning to other and terrible ears. The night was still, and though the distance was considerable, it was not so great as to render the chances of success desperate. Scarcely knowing what she did, and yet preserving, by a sort of instinctive prudence, the caution which constant exposure weaves into all our habits, the trembling woman made the effort.

"Husband! husband!" she cried, commencing plaintively, but her voice rising with the energy of excitement. "Husband, ride swiftly; our little Ruth lieth in the agony. For her life and thine, ride at thy horse's speed. Seek not the stables, but come with all haste to the postern, it shall be open to thee."

This was certainly a fearful summons for a father's ear, and there is little doubt that, had the feeble powers of

Ruth succeeded in conveying the words as far as she had wished, they would have produced the desired effect. But in vain did she call; her weak tones, though raised on the notes of keenest apprehension, could not force their way across so wide a space. And yet had she reason to think they were not entirely lost, for once her husband paused and seemed to listen, and once he quickened the pace of his horse; though neither of these proofs of intelligence was followed by any further sign of his having understood the alarm.

Content was now upon the hillock itself. If Ruth breathed at all during its passage, it was more imperceptible than the gentlest respiration of the sleeping infant. But when she saw him trotting with unconscious security along the path on the side next the dwellings, her impatience broke through all restraint, and throwing open the postern, she renewed her cries, in a voice that was no longer useless. The clattering of the unshodden hoof was again rapid, and in another minute her husband galloped unharmed to her side.

"Enter!" said the nearly dizzy wife, seizing the bridle, and leading the horse within the palisadoes. "Enter, husband, for the love of all that is thine; enter, and be thankful."

"What meaneth this terror, Ruth?" demanded Content, in as much displeasure, perhaps, as he could manifest to one so gentle, for a weakness betrayed in his own behalf, "is thy confidence in Him whose eye never closeth, and who equally watcheth the life of man and that of the falling sparrow, lost?"

Ruth was deaf. With hurried hands she drew the fastenings, let fall the bars, and turned a key which forced a triple-bolted lock to perform its office. Not till then did she feel either safe herself, or at liberty to render thanks for the safety of him, over whose danger she had so lately watched in agony.

"Why this care? Hast forgotten that the horse will suffer hunger, at this distance from the rack and manger?"

"Better that he starve than hair of thine should come to harm."

"Nay, nay, Ruth; dost not remember that the beast is the favorite of my father, who will ill brook his passing a night within the palisadoes?"

"Husband, you err; there is one in the fields."

"Is there place where One is not?"

"But I have seen creature of mortal birth, and creature, too, that hath no claim on thee or thine, and who trespasseth on our peace, no less than on our natural rights, to be where he lurketh."

"Go to ; thou art not used to be so late from thy pillow, my poor Ruth ; sleep hath come over thee, whilst standing on thy watch. Some cloud hath left its shadow on the fields, or, truly, it may be that the hunt did not drive the beasts as far from the clearing as we had thought. Come ; since thou wilt cling to my side, lay hand on the bridle of the horse, while I ease him of his burden."

As Content coolly proceeded to the task he had mentioned, the thoughts of his wife were momentarily diverted from their other sources of uneasiness, by the object which lay on the crupper of the nag, and which, until now, had entirely escaped her observation.

"Here is, indeed, the animal this day missing from our flock !" she exclaimed, as the carcass of a sheep fell heavily on the ground.

"Aye ; and killed with exceeding judgment, if not aptly dressed to our hands. Mutton will not be wanting for the husking-feast, and the stalled creature whose days were counted may live another season."

"And where didst find the slaughtered beast ?"

"On the limb of a growing hickory. Eben Dudley, with all his sleight in butchering, and in setting forth the excellence of his meats, could not have left an animal hanging from the branch of a sapling with greater knowledge of his craft. Thou seest, but a single meal is missing from the carcass, and that thy fleece is unharmed."

"This is not the work of a Pequod !" exclaimed Ruth, surprised at her own discovery ; "the red men do their mischief with less care."

"Nor has the tooth of wolf opened the veins of poor Straight-Horns. Here has been judgment in the slaughtering, as well as prudence in the consumption of the food. The hand that cut so lightly had intention of a second visit."

"And our father bid thee seek the creature where it was found ! Husband, I fear some heavy judgment for the sins of the parents is likely to befall the children."

"The babes are quietly in their slumbers, and, thus far, little wrong hath been done us. I'll cast the halter from the stalled animal ere I sleep, and Straight-Horns shall content us for the husking. We may have mutton less savory

for this evil chance, but the number of thy flock will be unaltered."

"And where is he who hath mingled in our prayers, and hath eaten of our bread; he who counselled so long in secret with our father, and who hath now vanished from among us like a vision?"

"That indeed is a question not readily to be answered," returned Content, who had hitherto maintained a cheerful air, in order to appease what he was fain to believe a causeless terror in the bosom of his partner, but who was induced by this question to drop his head like one that sought reasons within the repository of his own thoughts. "It mattereth not, Ruth Heathcote; the ordering of the affair is in the hands of a man of many years and great experience; should his aged wisdom fail, do we not know that one even wiser than he hath us in his keeping? I will return the beast to his rack, and when we shall have jointly asked favor of eyes that never sleep, we will go in confidence to our rest."

"Husband, thou quittest not the palisadoes again this night," said Ruth, arresting the hand that had already drawn a bolt, ere she spoke. "I have a warning of evil."

"I would the stranger had found some other shelter in which to pass his short resting season. That he hath made free with my flock, and that he hath administered to his hunger at some cost, when a single asking would have made him welcome to the best that the owner of the Wish-Ton-Wish can command, are truths that may not be denied. Still is he mortal man, as a goodly appetite hath proven, even should our belief in Providence so far waver as to harbor doubts of its unwillingness to suffer beings of injustice to wander in our forms and substance. I tell thee, Ruth, that the nag will be needed for to-morrow's service, and that our father will give but ill thanks should we leave it to make a bed on this cold hill-side. Go to thy rest and to thy prayers, trembler; I will close the postern with all care. Fear not; the stranger is of human wants, and his agency to do evil must needs be limited by human power."

"I fear none of white blood, nor of Christian parentage; the murderous heathen is in our fields."

"Thou dreamest, Ruth!"

"'Tis not a dream. I have seen the glowing eyeballs of a savage. Sleep was little like to come over me when set upon a watch like this. I thought me that the errand was

of unknown character, and that our father was exceedingly aged, and that perchance his senses might be duped, and how an obedient son ought not to be exposed. Thou knowest, Heathcote, that I could not look upon the danger of my children's father with indifference, and I followed to the nut-tree hillock."

"To the nut-tree. It was not prudent in thee—but the postern?"

"It was open; for were the key turned, who was there to admit us quickly had haste been needed?" returned Ruth, momentarily averting her face to conceal the flush excited by conscious delinquency. "Though I failed in caution, 'twas for thy safety, Heathcote. But on that hillock, and in the hollow left by a fallen tree, lies concealed a heathen!"

"I passed the nut-wood in going to the shambles of our strange butcher, and I drew the rein to give breath to the nag near it, as we returned with the burden. It cannot be; some creature of the forest hath alarmed thee."

"Aye! creature, formed, fashioned, gifted like ourselves, in all but color of the skin and blessing of the faith."

"This is strange delusion! If there were enemy at hand, would men subtle as those you fear suffer the master of the dwelling, and truly I may say it without vain-glory, one as likely as another to struggle stoutly for his own, to escape, when an ill-timed visit to the woods had delivered him unresisting into their hands? Go, go, good Ruth; thou may'st have seen a blackened log—perchance the frosts have left a fire-fly untouched, or it may be that some prowling bear has scented out the sweets of thy lately gathered hives."

Ruth again laid her hand firmly on the arm of her husband, who had withdrawn another bolt, and, looking him steadily in the face, she answered by saying solemnly, and with touching pathos—

"Thinkest thou, husband, that a mother's eye could be deceived?"

It might have been that the allusion to the tender beings whose fate depended on his care, or that the deeply serious, though mild and gentle manner of his consort, produced some fresher impression on the mind of Content. Instead of undoing the fastenings of the postern as he had intended, he deliberately drew its bolts again and paused to think.

"If it produce no other benefit than to quiet thy fears,"

good Ruth," he said, after a moment of reflection, "a little caution will be well repaid. Stay you, then, here, where the hillock may be watched, while I go wake a couple of the people. With stout Eben Dudley and experienced Reuben Ring to back me, my father's horse may surely be stabled."

Ruth contentedly assumed a task that she was quite equal to perform with intelligence and zeal. "Hie thee to the laborers' chambers, for I see a light still burning in the room of those you seek," was the answer she gave to a proposal that at least quieted the intenseness of her fears for him in whose behalf they had so lately been excited nearly to agony.

"It shall be quickly done; nay, stand not thus openly between the beams, wife. Thou mayest place thyself here at the doublings of the wood, beneath the loop, where harm would scarcely reach thee, though shot from artillery were to crush the timber."

With this admonition to be wary of a danger that he had so recently affected to despise, Content departed on his errand. The two laborers he had mentioned by name were youths of mould and strength, and they were well inured to toil, no less than to the particular privations and dangers of a border life. Like most men of their years and condition, they were practised too in the wiles of Indian cunning; and though the Province of Connecticut, compared to other settlements, had suffered but little in this species of murderous warfare, they both had martial feats and perilous experiences of their own to recount during the light labors of the long winter evenings.

Content crossed the court with a quick step; for, notwithstanding his steady unbelief, the image of his gentle wife posted on her outer watch hurried his movements. The rap he gave at the door on reaching the apartment of those he sought, was loud as it was sudden.

"Who calls?" demanded a deep-toned and firm voice from within, at the first blow of the knuckles on the plank.

"Quit thy beds quickly, and come forth with the arms appointed for a sally."

"That is soon done," answered a stout woodsman, throwing open the door and standing before Content in the garments he had worn throughout the day. "We were just dreaming that the night was not to pass without a summons to the loops."

"Hast seen aught?"

"Our eyes were not shut more than those of others ; we saw him enter that no man hath seen depart."

"Come, fellow—Whittal Ring would scarce give wiser speech than this cunning reply of thine. My wife is at the postern, and it is fit we go to relieve her watch. Thou wilt not forget the horns of powder, since it would not tell to our credit, were there service for the pieces, and we lacking in wherewithal to give them a second discharge."

The hirelings obeyed, and as little time was necessary to arm those who never slept without weapons and ammunition within reach of their hands, Content was speedily followed by his dependents. Ruth was found at her post ; but when urged by her husband to declare what had passed in his absence, she was compelled to admit that, though the moon had come forth brighter and clearer from behind the clouds, she had seen nothing to add to her alarm.

"We will then lead the beast to his stall, and close our duty by setting a single watch for the rest of the night," said the husband. "Reuben shall keep the postern, while Eben and I will have a care for my father's nag, not forgetting the carcass for the husking-feast. Dost hear, deaf Dudley ? Cast the mutton upon the crupper of the beast and follow to the stables."

"Here has been no common workman at my office," said the blunt Eben, who, though an ordinary farm laborer, according to a usage still very generally prevalent in the country, was also skilful in the craft of the butcher. "I have brought many a wether to his end, but this is the first sheep, within all my experience, that hath kept the fleece while a portion of the body has been in the pot ! Lie there, poor Straight-Horns, if quiet thou canst be, after such strange butchery. Reuben, I paid thee, as the sun rose, a Spanish piece of silver for the trifle of debt that lay between us in behalf of the good turn thou didst the shoes, which were none the better for the last hunt in the hills. Hast ever that pistareen about thee ?"

This question, which was put in a lowered tone, and only to the ear of the party concerned, was answered in the affirmative.

"Give it me, lad ; in the morning thou shalt be paid with usurer's interest."

Another summons from Content, who had now led the nag loaded with the carcass of the sheep without the postern, cut short the secret conference. Eben Dudley, having

received the coin, hastened to follow. But the distance to the out-buildings was sufficient to enable him to effect his mysterious purpose without discovery. Whilst Content endeavored to calm the apprehensions of his wife, who still persisted in sharing his danger, by such reasons as he could on the instant command, the credulous Dudley placed the thin piece of silver between his teeth, and, with a pressure that denoted the prodigious force of his jaws, caused it to assume a beaten and rounded shape. He then slyly dropped the battered coin into the muzzle of his gun, taking care to secure its presence until he himself should send it on its disenchanting message, by a wad torn from the lining of part of his vestments. Supported by this redoubtable auxiliary, the superstitious but still courageous borderer followed his companion, whistling a low air that equally denoted his indifference to danger of an ordinary nature, and his sensibility to impressions of a less earthly character.

They who dwell in the older districts of America, where art and labor have united for generations to clear the earth of its inequalities, and to remove the vestiges of a state of nature, can form but little idea of the thousand objects that may exist in a clearing, to startle the imagination of one who has admitted alarm, when seen in the doubtful light of even a cloudless moon. Still less can they who have never quitted the old world, and who having only seen, can only imagine fields smooth as the surface of tranquil water, picture the effect produced by those lingering remnants, which may be likened to so many mouldering monuments of the fallen forest scattered at such an hour over a broad surface of open land. Accustomed as they were to the sight, Content and his partner, excited by their fears, fancied each dark and distant stump a savage, and they passed no angle in the high and heavy fences without throwing a jealous glance to see that some enemy did not lie stretched within its shadows.

Still no new motive for apprehension arose during the brief period that the two adventurers were employed in administering to the comfort of the Puritan's steed. The task was ended, the carcass of the slaughtered Straight-Horns had been secured, and Ruth was already urging her husband to return, when their attention was drawn to the attitude and mien of their companion.

"The man hath departed as he came," said Eben Dudley, who stood shaking his head in open doubt before an emp-

ty stall ; " here is no beast, though with these eyes did I see the half-wit bring hither a well-filled measure of speckled oats to feed the nag. He who favored us with his presence at the supper and the thanksgiving, hath tired of his company before the hour of rest had come."

" The horse is truly wanting," said Content ; " the man must needs be in exceeding haste, to have ridden into the forest as the night grew deepest, and when the longest summer day would scarce bring a better hack than that he rode to another Christian dwelling. There is reason for this industry, but it is enough that it concerns us not. We will now seek our rest, in the certainty that One watcheth our slumbers whose vigilance can never fail."

Though man could not trust himself to sleep in that country without the security of bars and bolts, we have already had occasion to say that property was guarded with but little care. The stable-door was merely closed by a wooden latch, and the party returned from this short sortie, with steps that were a little quickened by a sense of an uneasiness that beset them in forms suited to their several characters. But shelter was at hand, and it was speedily regained.

" Thou hast seen nothing ? " said Content to Reuben Ring, who had been chosen for his quick eye, and a sagacity that was as remarkable as was his brother's impotency ; " thou hast seen nothing at thy watch ? "

" Naught unusual ; and yet I like not yonder billet of wood, near to the fence against the knoll. If it were not so plainly a half-burnt log, one might fancy there is life in it. But when fancy is at work, the sight is keen. Once or twice I have thought it seemed to be rolling towards the brook ; I am not, even now, certain that when first seen it did not lie eight or ten feet higher against the bank."

" It may be a living thing ! "

" On the faith of a woodman's eye, it well may be," said Eben Dudley ; " but should it be haunted by a legion of wicked spirits, one may bring it to quiet from the loop at the nearest corner. Stand aside, Madame Heathcote," for the character and wealth of the proprietors of the valley gave Ruth a claim to this term of respect among the laborers ; " let me thrust the piece through the—stop, there is an especial charm in the gun, which it might be sinful to waste on such a creature. It may be no more than some sweet-toothed bear. I will answer for the charge at my own cost, if thou wilt lend me thy musket, Reuben Ring."

"It shall not be," said his master; "one known to my father hath this night entered our dwelling and fed at our board; if he hath departed in a way but little wont among those of this Colony, yet hath he done no great wrong. I will go nigh, and examine with less risk of error."

There was, in this proposal, too much of that spirit of right-doing which governed all of those simple regions, to meet serious opposition. Content, supported by Eben Dudley, again quitted the postern, and proceeded directly, though still not without sufficient caution, towards the point where the suspicious object lay. A bend in the fence had first brought it into view, for previously to reaching that point, its apparent direction might for some distance have been taken under shelter of the shadows of the rails, which, at the immediate spot where it was seen, were turned suddenly in a line with the eyes of the spectators. It seemed as if the movements of those who approached were watched; for the instant they left the defences, the dark object was assuredly motionless; even the keen eye of Reuben Ring beginning to doubt whether some deception of vision had not led him, after all, to mistake a billet of wood for a creature of life.

But Content and his companion were not induced to change their determination. Even when within fifty feet of the object, though the moon fell full and brightly upon the surface, its character baffled conjecture. One affirmed it was the end of a charred log, many of which still lay scattered about the fields, and the others believed it to be some cringing animal of the woods. Twice Content raised his piece to fire, and as often did he let it fall, in reluctance to do injury to even a quadruped of whose character he was ignorant. It is more than probable that his less considerate and but half obedient companion would have decided the question soon after leaving the postern, had not the peculiar contents of his musket rendered him delicate of its uses.

"Look to thy weapons," said the former, loosening his own hunting-knife in his sheath. "We will draw near and make certainty of what is doubtful."

They did so, and the gun of Dudley was thrust rudely into the side of the object of their distrust, before it again betrayed life or motion. Then, indeed, as if further disguise was useless, an Indian lad of some fifteen years rose deliberately to his feet, and stood before them in the sullen dignity of a captured warrior. Content hastily seized

the stripling by an arm, and followed by Eben, who occasionally quickened the footsteps of the prisoner by an impetus obtained from the breech of his own musket, they hurriedly returned within the defences.

"My life against that of Straight-Horns, which is now of no great value," said Dudley, as he pushed the last bolt of the fastenings into its socket, "we hear no more of this red-skin's companions to-night. I never knew an Indian raise his whoop when a scout had fallen into the hands of the enemy."

"This may be true," returned the other, "and yet must a sleeping household be guarded. We may be brought to rely on the overlooking favor of Providence, working with the means of our own manhood, ere the sun shall arise."

Content was a man of few words, but one of exceeding steadiness and resolution in moments of need. He was perfectly aware that an Indian youth, like him he had captured, would not have been found in that place, and under the circumstances in which he was actually taken, without a design of sufficient magnitude to justify the hazard. The tender age of the stripling, too, forbade the belief that he was unaccompanied. But he silently agreed with his laboring man, that the capture would probably cause the attack, if any such were meditated, to be deferred. He therefore instructed his wife to withdraw into her chamber, while he took measures to defend the dwelling in the last emergency. Without giving any unnecessary alarm, a measure that would have produced less effect on an enemy without, than the imposing stillness which now reigned within the defences, he ordered two or three more of the stoutest of his dependents to be summoned to the palisades. A keen scrutiny was made into the state of all the different outlets of the place; muskets were carefully examined; charges were given to be watchful, and regular sentinels were stationed within the shadows of the buildings, at points where, unseen themselves, they could look out in safety upon the fields.

Content then took his captive, with whom he had made no attempt to exchange a syllable, and led him to the block-house. The door which communicated with the basement of this building was always open, in readiness for refuge in the event of any sudden alarm. He entered; caused the lad to mount by a ladder to the floor above, and then withdrawing the means of retreat, he turned the

key without, in perfect confidence that his prisoner was secure.

Notwithstanding all this care, morning had nearly dawned before the prudent father and husband sought his pillow. His steadiness, however, had prevented the apprehensions, which kept his own eyes and those of his general partner so long open, from extending beyond the few whose services were, in such an emergency, deemed indispensable to safety. Toward the last watches of the night, only, did the images of the scenes through which they had just passed, become dim and confused, and then both husband and wife slept soundly and happily without disturbance.

CHAPTER V.

“Are you so brave? I’ll have you talked with anon.”

—*Coriolanus.*

THE axe and the brand had been early and effectually used, immediately around the dwelling of the Heathcotes. A double object had been gained by removing most of the vestiges of the forest from the vicinity of the buildings; the necessary improvements were executed with greater facility, and, a consideration of no small importance, the cover which the American savage is known to seek in his attacks was thrown to a distance that greatly diminished the danger of a surprise.

Favored by the advantage which had been obtained by this foresight, and by the brilliancy of a night that soon emulated the brightness of day, the duty of Eben Dudley and of his associate on the watch was rendered easy of accomplishment. Indeed, so secure did they become toward morning, chiefly on account of the capture of the Indian lad, that more than once, eyes that should have been differently employed, yielded to the drowsiness of the hour, and to habit, or were only opened at intervals that left their owners in some doubt as to the passage of the intermediate time. But no sooner did the signs of day approach, than, agreeably to their instructions, the watchers sought their beds, and for an hour or two they slept soundly, and without fear.

When his father had closed the prayers of the morning, Content, in the midst of the assembled family, communi-

cated as many of the incidents of the past night, as in his judgment seemed necessary. His discretion limited the narrative to the capture of the native youth, and to the manner in which he had ordered the watch for the security of the family. On the subject of his own excursion to the forest, and all connected therewith, he was guardedly silent.

It is unnecessary to relate the manner in which this startling information was received. The cold and reserved brow of the Puritan became still more thoughtful; the young men looked grave and resolute; the maidens of the household grew pale, shuddered, and whispered hurriedly together; while the little Ruth and a female child of nearly her own age, named Martha, clung close to the side of the mistress of the family, who, having nothing new to learn, had taught herself to assume the appearance of a resolution she was far from feeling.

The first visitation which befell the listeners, after their eager ears had drunk in the intelligence Content so briefly imparted, was a renewal of the spiritual strivings of his father in the form of prayer. A particular petition was put up in quest of light on their future proceedings, for mercy on all men, for a better mind to those who wandered through the wilderness seeking victims of their wrath, for the gifts of grace on the heathen, and finally for victory over all their carnal enemies, let them come whence or in what aspect they might.

Fortified by these additional exercises, old Mark next made himself the master of all the signs and evidences of the approach of danger, by a more rigid and minute inquiry into the visible circumstances of the arrest of the young savage. Content received a merited and grateful reward for his prudence, in the approbation of one whom he still continued to revere with a mental dependence little less than that with which he had leaned on his father's wisdom in the days of his childhood.

"Thou hast done well and wisely," said his father; "but more remains to be performed by thy wisdom and fortitude. We have had tidings that the heathen near the Providence Plantations are unquiet, and that they are lending their minds to wicked counsellors. We are not to sleep in too much security, because a forest journey of a few days lies between their villages and our own clearing. Bring forth the captive; I will question him on the matter of this visit."

Until now, so much did the fears of all turn toward the enemies who were believed to be lurking near, that little thought had been bestowed on the prisoner in the block-house. Content, who well knew the invincible resolution, no less than the art of an Indian, had forborne to question him when taken ; for he believed the time to be better suited to vigilant action, than to interrogatories that the character of the boy was likely to render perfectly useless. He now proceeded, however, with an interest that began to quicken as circumstances rendered its indulgence less unsuitable, to seek his captive, in order to bring him before the searching ordeal of his father's authority.

The key of the lower door of the block-house hung where it had been deposited ; the ladder was replaced, and Content mounted quietly to the apartment where he had placed his captive. The room was the lowest of three that the building contained, all being above that which might be termed its basement. The latter, having no aperture but its door, was a dark, hexagonal space, partly filled with such articles as might be needed in the event of an alarm, and which, at the same time, were frequently required for the purposes of domestic use. In the centre of the area was a deep well, so fitted and protected by a wall of stone, as to admit of water being drawn into the rooms above. The door itself was of massive hewn timber. The squared logs of the upper stories projected a little beyond the stonework of the basement, the second tier of the timbers containing a few loops, out of which missiles might be discharged downward, on any assailants that approached nearer than should be deemed safe for the security of the basement. As has been stated, the two principal stories were perforated with long narrow slits through the timber, which answered the double purposes of windows and loop-holes. Though the apartments were so evidently arranged for defence, the plain domestic furniture they contained was suited to the wants of the family, should they be driven to the building for refuge. There was also an apartment in the roof, or attic, as already mentioned ; but it scarcely entered into the more important uses of the block-house. Still the advantage which it received from its elevation was not overlooked. A small cannon, of a kind once known and much used under the name of grasshoppers, had been raised to the place, and time had been when it was rightly considered as of the last importance to the safety of the inmates of the dwelling. For some years

its muzzle had been seen by all the straggling aborigines who visited the valley, frowning through one of these openings which were now converted into glazed windows ; and there is reason to think, that the reputation which the little piece of ordnance thus silently obtained, had a powerful agency in so long preserving unmolested the peace of the valley.

The word unmolested is perhaps too strong. More than one alarm had in fact occurred, though no positive acts of violence had ever been committed within the limits which the Puritan claimed as his own. On only one occasion, however, did matters proceed so far that the veteran had been induced to take his post in this warlike attic ; where, there is little doubt, had occasion further offered for his services, he would have made a suitable display of his knowledge in the science of gunnery. But the simple history of the Wish-Ton-Wish had furnished another evidence of a political truth, which cannot be too often presented to the attention of our countrymen ; we mean, that the best preservative of peace is preparation for war. In the case before us, the hostile attitude assumed by old Mark and his dependents had effected all that was desirable, without proceeding to the extremity of shedding blood. Such peaceful triumphs were far more in accordance with the present principles of the Puritan, than they would have been with the reckless temper which had governed his youth. In the quaint and fanatical humor of the times, he had held a family thanksgiving around the instrument of their security, and from that moment the room itself became a favorite resorting-place for the old soldier. Thither he often mounted, even in the hours of deep night, to indulge in those secret spiritual exercises which formed the chiefest solace, and seemingly, indeed, the great employment of his life. In consequence of this habit, the attic of the block-house came in time to be considered sacred to the uses of the master of the valley. The care and thought of Content had gradually supplied it with many conveniences that might contribute to the personal comfort of his father, while the spirit was engaged in these mental conflicts. At length, the old man was known to use the mattress, that among other things it now contained, and to pass the time between the setting and the rising of the sun in its solitude. The aperture originally cut for the exhibition of the grasshopper had been glazed ; and no article of comfort, which was once caused to mount

the difficult ladder that led to the chamber, was ever seen to descend.

There was something in the austere sanctity of old Mark Heathcote, that was favorable to the practices of an anchorite. The youths of the dwelling regarded his unbending brow, and the undisturbed gravity of the eye it shadowed, with a respect akin to awe. Had the genuine benevolence of his character been less tried, or had he mingled in active life at a later period, it might readily have been his fate to have shared in the persecution which his countrymen heaped on those who were believed to deal with influences it is thought impious to exercise. Under actual circumstances, however, the sentiment went no farther than a deep and universal reverence, that left its object, and the neglected little piece of artillery, to the quiet possession of an apartment, to invade which would have been deemed an act bordering on sacrilege.

The business of Content, on the occasion which caused his present visit to the edifice whose history and description we have thought it expedient thus to give at some length, led him no farther than to the lowest of its more military apartments. On raising the trap, for the first time a feeling of doubt came over him, as to the propriety of having left the boy so long unsolaced by words of kindness, or by deed of charity. It was appeased by observing that his concern was awakened in behalf of one whose spirit was quite equal to sustain greater trials.

The young Indian stood before one of the loops, looking out upon that distant forest in which he had so lately roamed at liberty, with a gaze too riveted to turn aside even at the interruption occasioned by the presence of his captor.

"Come from thy prison, child," said Content, in the tones of mildness; "whatever may have been thy motive in lurking around this dwelling, thou art human, and must know human wants; come forth and receive food; none here will harm thee."

The language of commiseration is universal. Though the words of the speaker were evidently unintelligible to him for whose ears they were intended, their import was conveyed in the kindness of the accents. The eyes of the boy turned slowly from the view of the woods, and he looked his captor long and steadily in the face. Content now indeed discovered that he had spoken in a language that was unknown to his captive, and he endeavored by

gestures of kindness to invite the lad to follow him. He was silently and quietly obeyed. On reaching the court, however, the prudence of a border proprietor in some degree overcame his feelings of compassion.

"Bring hither yon tether," he said to Whittal Ring, who at the moment was passing toward the stables; "here is one wild as the most untamed of thy colts. Man is of our nature and of our spirit, let him be of what color it may have pleased Providence to stamp his features; but he who would have a young savage in his keeping on the morrow, must look sharply to his limbs to-day."

The lad submitted quietly until a turn of the rope was passed around one of his arms; but when Content was fain to complete the work by bringing the other limb into the same state of subjection, the boy glided from his grasp, and cast the fetters from him in disdain. This act of decided resistance, was, however, followed by no effort to escape. The moment his person was released from a confinement, which he probably considered as implying distrust of his ability to endure pain with the fortitude of a warrior, the lad turned quietly and proudly to his captor, and, with an eye in which scorn and haughtiness were alike glowing, seemed to defy the fulness of his anger.

"Be it so," resumed the equal-minded Content, "if thou likest not the bonds which, notwithstanding the pride of man, are often healthful to the body, keep then the use of thy limbs, and see that they do no mischief. Whittal, look thou to the postern, and remember it is forbidden to go afield until my father hath had this heathen under examination. The cub is seldom found far from the cunning of the aged bear."

He then made a sign to the boy to follow, and proceeded to the apartment where his father, surrounded by most of the family, awaited their coming. Uncompromising domestic discipline was one of the striking characteristics of the sway of the Puritans. That austerity of manner which was thought to mark a sense of a fallen and probationary state was early taught; for, among a people who deemed all mirth a sinful levity, the practice of self-command would readily come to be esteemed the basis of virtue. But whatever might have been the peculiar merit of Mark Heathcote and his household in this particular, it was likely to be exceeded by the exhibition of the same quality in the youth who had so strangely become their captive.

We have already said that this child of the woods might have seen some fifteen years. Though he had shot upward like a vigorous and thrifty plant, and with the freedom of a thriving sapling in his native forests, rearing its branches toward the light, his stature had not yet reached that of man. In height, form, and attitudes, he was a model of active, natural, and graceful boyhood. But while his limbs were so fair in their proportions, they were scarcely muscular; still every movement exhibited a freedom and ease which announced the grace of childhood, without the smallest evidence of that restraint which creeps into our air as the factitious feelings of later life begin to assert their influence. The smooth, rounded trunk of the mountain ash is not more upright and free from blemish than was the figure of the boy, who moved into the curious circle that opened for his entrance and closed against his retreat, with the steadiness of one who came to bestow instead of appearing to receive judgment.

"I will question him," said old Mark Heathcote, attentively regarding the keen and settled eye that met his long, stern gaze, as steadily as a less intelligent creature of the woods would return the look of man. "I will question him; and perchance fear will wring from his lips a confession of the evil that he and his have meditated against me and mine."

"I think he is ignorant of our forms of speech," returned Content; "for the words of neither kindness nor anger will force him to a change of feature."

"It is then meet that we commence by asking Him who hath the secret to open all hearts to be our assistant." The Puritan then raised his voice in a short and exceedingly particular petition, in which he implored the Ruler of the Universe to interpret his meaning in the forthcoming examination, in a manner that, had his request been granted, would have savored not a little of the miraculous. With this preparation he proceeded directly to his task. But neither questions, signs, nor prayer, produced the slightest visible effect. The boy gazed at the rigid and austere countenance of his interrogator, while the words were issuing from his lips; but the instant they ceased, his searching and quick eye rolled over the different curious faces by which he was hemmed in, as if he trusted more to the sense of sight than that of hearing, for the information he naturally sought concerning his future lot. It was found impossible to obtain from him gesture or sound that should

betray either the purport of his questionable visit, his own personal appellation, or that of his tribe.

"I have been among the red skins of the Providence Plantations," Eben Dudley at length ventured to observe ; "and their language, though but a crooked and irrational jargon, is not unknown to me. With the leave of all present," he continued, regarding the Puritan in a manner to betray that this general term meant him alone, "with the leave of all present, I will put it to the youngster in such a fashion that he will be glad to answer."

Receiving a look of assent, the borderer uttered certain uncouth and guttural sounds, which, notwithstanding they entirely failed of their effect, he stoutly maintained were the ordinary terms of salutation among the people to whom the prisoner was supposed to belong.

"I know him to be a Narragansett," continued Eben, reddening with vexation at his defeat, and throwing a glance of no peculiar amity at the youth who had so palpably refuted his claim to skill in the Indian tongues ; "you see he hath the shells of the sea-side worked into the bordering of his moccasins ; and besides this sign, which is certain as that night hath its stars, he beareth the look of a chief that was slain by the Pequods, at the wish of us Christians, after an affair in which, whether it was well done or ill done, I did some part of the work myself."

"And how call you that chief ?" demanded Mark.

"Why, he had various names, according to the business he was on. To some he was known as the Leaping Panther, for he was a man of an extraordinary jump ; and others again used to style him Pepperage, since there was a saying that neither bullet nor sword could enter his body ; though that was a mistake, as his death hath fully proven. But his real name, according to the uses and sounds of his own people, was My Anthony Mow."

"My Anthony Mow !"

"Yes ; My, meaning that he was their chief ; Anthony, being the given name ; and Mow, that of the breed of which he came ;" rejoined Eben with confidence, satisfied that he had finally produced a sufficiently sonorous appellative and a perfectly lucid etymology. But criticism was diverted from its aim by the action of the prisoner, as these equivocal sounds struck his ear. Ruth recoiled, and clasped her little namesake closer to her side, when she saw the dazzling brightness of his glowing eyes, and the sudden and expressive dilation of his nostrils. For a moment his

lips were compressed with more than the usual force of Indian gravity, and then they slightly severed. A low, soft, and, as even the startled matron was obliged to confess, a plaintive sound issued from between them, repeating mournfully—

“Miantonimoh!”

The word was uttered with a distinct, but deeply guttural enunciation.

“The child mourneth for its parent,” exclaimed the sensitive mother. “The hand that slew the warrior may have done an evil deed.”

“I see the evident and foreordering will of a wise Providence in this,” said Mark Heathcote with solemnity. “The youth hath been deprived of one who might have enticed him still deeper into the bonds of the heathen, and hither hath he been led in order to be placed upon the straight and narrow path. He shall become a dweller among mine, and we will strive against the evil of his mind until instruction shall prevail. Let him be fed and nurtured equally with the things of life and the things of the world; for who knoweth that which is designed in his behalf?”

If there were more of faith than of rational conclusion in this opinion of the old Puritan, there was no external evidence to contradict it. While the examination of the boy was going on in the dwelling, a keen scrutiny had taken place in the out-buildings, and in the adjacent fields. Those engaged in this duty soon returned, to say that not the smallest trace of an ambush was visible about the place; and as the captive himself had no weapons of hostility, even Ruth began to hope that the mysterious conceptions of her father on the subject were not entirely delusive. The captive was now fed, and old Mark was on the point of making a proper beginning in the task he had so gladly assumed, by an up-offering of thanks, when Whittal Ring broke rudely into the room, and disturbed the solemnity of his preparation, by a sudden and boisterous outcry.

“Away with scythe and sickle,” shouted the witling; “it’s many a day since the fields of Wish-Ton-Wish have been trodden down by horsemen in buff jerkins, or ambushed by creeping Wampanaogs.”

“There is danger at hand!” exclaimed the sensitive Ruth. “Husband, the warning was timely.”

“Here are truly some riding from the forest, and drawing nigh to the dwelling; but as they are seemingly men of our kind and faith, we have need rather of rejoicing

than terror. They bear the air of messengers from the river."

Mark Heathcote listened with surprise, and perhaps with a momentary uneasiness; but all emotion passed away on the instant, for one so disciplined in mind rarely permitted any outward exposure of his secret thoughts. The Puritan calmly issued an order to replace the prisoner in the block-house, assigning the upper of the two principal floors for his keeping; and then he prepared himself to receive guests that were little wont to disturb the quiet of his secluded valley. He was still in the act of giving forth the necessary mandates, when the tramp of horses was heard in the court, and he was summoned to the door to greet his unknown visitors.

"We have reached Wish-Ton-Wish, and the dwelling of Captain Mark Heathcote," said one, who appeared, by his air and better attire, to be the principal of four that composed the party.

"By the favor of Providence, I call myself the unworthy owner of this place of refuge."

"Then a subject so loyal, and a man who hath so long proved himself faithful in the wilderness, will not turn from his door the agents of his anointed master."

"There is One greater than any of earth who hath taught us to leave the latch free. I pray you to alight, and to partake of that we can offer."

With this courteous but quaint explanation the horsemen dismounted; and, giving their steeds into the keeping of the laborers of the farm, they entered the dwelling.

While the maidens of Ruth were preparing a repast suited to the hour and to the quality of the guests, Mark and his son had abundant opportunity to examine the appearance of the strangers. They were men who seemed to wear visages peculiarly adapted to the character of their entertainers, being in truth so singularly demure and grave in aspect, as to excite some suspicion of their being newly converted zealots to the mortifying customs of the Colony. Notwithstanding their extraordinary gravity, and contrary to the usages of those regions, too, they bore about their persons certain evidence of being used to the fashions of the other hemisphere. The pistols attached to their saddle-bows, and other accoutrements of a warlike aspect, would perhaps have attracted no observation, had they not been accompanied by a fashion in the doublet, the hat, and the boot, that denoted a greater intercourse with the

mother country than was usual among the less sophisticated natives of those regions. None traversed the forests without the means of defence ; but, on the other hand, few wore the hostile implements with so much of a worldly air, or with so many minor particularities of some recent caprice in fashion. As they had, however, announced themselves to be officers of the king, they, who of necessity must be chiefly concerned in the object of their visit, patiently awaited the pleasure of the strangers, to learn why duty had called them so far from all the more ordinary haunts of men ; for, like the native owners of the soil, the self-restrained religionists appeared to reckon an indiscreet haste in anything among the more unmanly weaknesses. Nothing for the first half-hour of their visit escaped the guarded lips of men evidently well skilled in their present duty, which might lead to a clew of its purport. The morning meal passed almost without discourse, and one of the party had arisen with the professed object of looking to their steeds, before he, who seemed the chief, led the conversation to a subject, that by its political bearing might, in some degree, be supposed to have a remote connection with the principal object of his journey to that sequestered valley.

"Have the tidings of the gracious boon that hath lately flowed from the favor of the king, reached the distant settlement?" asked the principal personage, one that wore a far less military air than a younger companion, who, by his confident mien, appeared to be the second in authority.

"To what boon hath thy words import?" demanded the Puritan, turning a glance of the eye at his son and daughter, together with the others in hearing, as if to admonish them to be prudent.

"I speak of the Royal Charter by which the people on the banks of the Connecticut, and they of the Colony of New Haven, are henceforth permitted to unite in government ; granting them liberty of conscience, and great freedom of self-control."

"Such a gift were worthy of a king ! Hath Charles done this?"

"That hath he, and much more that is fitting in a kind and royal mind. The realm is finally freed from the abuses of usurpers, and power now resteth in the hands of a race long set apart for its privileges."

"It is to be wished that practice shall render them expert and sage in its uses," rejoined Mark, somewhat dryly.

"It is a merry prince! and one but little given to the study and exercises of his martyred father; but he hath great cunning in discourse, and few around his dread person have keener wit or more ready tongue."

Mark bowed his head in silence, seemingly little disposed to push the discussion of his earthly master's qualities to a conclusion that might prove offensive to so loyal an admirer. One inclining to suspicion would have seen, or thought he saw, certain equivocal glances from the stranger, while he was thus lauding the vivacious qualities of the restored monarch, which should denote a desire to detect how far the eulogiums might be grateful to his host. He acquiesced, however, in the wishes of the Puritan, though whether understandingly, or without design, it would have been difficult to say, and submitted to change the discourse.

"It is likely, by thy presence, that tidings have reached the Colonies from home," said Content, who understood, by the severe and reserved expression of his father's features, that it was a fitting time for him to interpose.

"There is one arrived in the Bay, within the month, by means of a king's frigate; but no trader hath yet passed between the countries, except the ship which maketh the annual voyage from Bristol to Boston."

"And he who hath arrived—doth he come in authority?" demanded Mark; "or is he merely another servant of the Lord, seeking to rear his tabernacle in the wilderness?"

"Thou shalt know the nature of his errand," returned the stranger, casting a glance of malicious intelligence obliquely towards his companions, at the same time that he arose and placed in the hand of his host a commission which evidently bore the Seal of State. "It is expected that all aid will be given to one bearing this warranty, by a subject of a loyalty so approved as that of Captain Mark Heathcote."

CHAPTER VI.

"But, by your leave,
I am an officer of state, and come
To speak with—" *Coriolanus*.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sharp look which the messenger of the Crown deliberately and now openly fastened on the master of Wish-Ton-Wish, while the latter was reading the

instrument that was placed before his eyes, there was no evidence of uneasiness to be detected in the unmoved features of the latter. Mark Heathcote had too long schooled his passions to suffer an unseemly manifestation of surprise to escape him ; and he was by nature a man of far too much nerve to betray alarm at any trifling exhibition of danger. Returning the parchment to the other, he said with unmoved calmness to his son :

"We must open wide the doors of Wish-Ton-Wish. Here is one charged with authority to look into the secrets of all the dwellings of the Colony." Then, turning with dignity to the agent of the Crown, he added, "Thou hast better commence thy duty in season, for we are many and occupy much space."

The face of the stranger flushed a little, it might have been with shame for the vocation in which he had come so far, or it might have been in resentment at so direct a hint that the sooner his disagreeable office should be ended, the better it would please his host. Still, he betrayed no intention of shrinking from its performance. On the contrary, discarding somewhat of that subdued manner which he had probably thought it politic to assume, while sounding the opinions of one so rigid, he broke out rather suddenly in the exhibition of a humor somewhat better suited to the tastes of whom he served.

"Come, then," he cried, winking at his companions, "since doors are opened, it would speak ill of our breeding should we refuse to enter. Captain Heathcote has been a soldier, and he knows how to excuse a traveller's freedom. Surely one who has tasted of the pleasures of the camp must weary at times of this sylvan life?"

"The steadfast in faith weary not, though the road be long and the wayfaring grievous."

"Hum—'tis pity that the journeying between merry England and these colonies is not more brisk. I do not presume to instruct a gentleman who is my senior, and peradventure my better ; but opportunity is everything in a man's fortunes. It were charity to let you know, worthy sir, that opinions have changed at home : it is full a twelve-month since I have heard a line of the Psalms, or a verse of St. Paul quoted, in discourse ; at least by men who are at all esteemed for their discretion."

"This change in the fashion of speech may better suit thy earthly than thy heavenly master," said Mark Heathcote, sternly.

"Well, well, that peace may exist between us, we will not bandy words about a text more or less, if we may escape the sermon," rejoined the stranger, no longer affecting restraint, but laughing with sufficient freedom at his own conceit ; a species of enjoyment in which his companions mingled with great good-will, and without much deference to the humor of those under whose roof they found themselves.

A small glowing spot appeared on the pale cheek of the Puritan, and disappeared again like some transient deception produced by the play of light. Even the meek eye of Content kindled at the insult ; but, like his father, the practice of self-denial, and a never-slumbering consciousness of his own imperfections, smothered the momentary exhibition of displeasure.

"If thou hast authority to look into the secret places of our habitations, do thy office," he said with a peculiarity of tone which served to remind the other that, though he bore the commission of the Stuart, he was in an extremity of his empire, where even the authority of a king lost some of its value.

Affecting to be, and possibly in reality conscious of his indiscretion, the stranger hastily disposed himself to the execution of his duty.

"It would be a great and a pain-saving movement," he said, "were we to assemble the household in one apartment. The government at home would be glad to hear something of the quality of its lieges in this distant quarter. Thou hast doubtless a bell to summon the flocks at stated periods."

"Our people are yet near the dwelling," returned Content : "if it be thy pleasure, none shall be absent from the search."

Gathering from the eye of the other that he was serious in this wish, the quiet colonist proceeded to the gate, and, placing a shell to his mouth, blew one of those blasts that are so often heard in the forests summoning families to their homes, and which are alike used as the signals of peaceful recall, or of alarm. The sound soon brought all within hearing to the court, whither the Puritan and his unpleasant guests now repaired as to the spot best suited to the purposes of the latter.

"Hallam," said the principal personage of the four visitors, addressing him who might once have been, if he were not still, some subaltern in the forces of the Crown, for he

was attired in a manner that bespoke him but a half-disguised dragoon, "I leave thee to entertain this goodly assemblage. Thou may'st pass the time in discoursing on the vanities of the world, of which I believe few are better qualified to speak understandingly than thyself, or a few words of admonition to hold fast to the faith would come with fitting weight from thy lips. But look to it, that none of thy flock wander; for here must every creature of them remain, stationary as the indiscreet partner of Lot, till I have cast an eye into all the cunning places of their abode. So set wit to work, and show thy breeding as an entertainer."

After this irreverent charge to his subordinate, the speaker signified to Content and his father, that he and his remaining attendant would proceed to a more minute examination of the premises.

When Mark Heathcote saw that the man who had so rudely broken upon the peaceful habits of his family was ready to proceed, he advanced steadily in his front, like one who boldly invited inquiry, and by a grave gesture desired him to follow. The stranger, perhaps as much from habit as from any settled design, first cast a free glance around at the bevy of fluttered maidens, leered even upon the modest and meek-eyed Ruth herself, and then took the direction indicated by him who had so unhesitatingly assumed the office of a guide.

The object of this examination still remained a secret between those who made it, and the Puritan who had probably found its motive in the written warranty which had been submitted to his inspection. That it proceeded from fitting authority, none might doubt; and that it was in some manner connected with the events that were known to have wrought so sudden and so great a change in the government of the mother country, all believed probable. Notwithstanding the seeming mystery of the procedure, the search was not the less rigid. Few habitations of any size or pretension were erected in those times which did not contain certain secret places where valuables and even persons might be concealed, at need. The strangers displayed great familiarity with the nature and ordinary positions of these private recesses. Not a chest, a closet, nor even a drawer of size, escaped their vigilance; nor was there a plank that sounded hollow, but the master of the valley was called on to explain the cause. In one or two instances, boards were wrested violently from their

fastenings, and the cavities beneath were explored, with a wariness that increased as the investigation proceeded without success.

The strangers appeared irritated by their failure. An hour passed in the keenest scrutiny, and nothing had transpired which brought them any nearer to their object. That they had commenced the search with more than usually confident anticipations of a favorable result, might have been gathered from the boldness of tone assumed by their chief, and the pointed personal allusions in which, from time to time, he indulged, often too freely, and always at some expense to the loyalty of the Heathcotes. But when he had completed the circuit of the buildings, having entered all parts from their cellars to the garrets, his spleen became so strong as, in some degree, to get the better of a certain parade of discretion, which he had hitherto managed to maintain in the midst of all his levity.

"Hast seen nothing, Mr. Hallam?" he demanded of the individual left on watch, as they crossed the court in retiring from the last of the out-buildings; "or have those traces which led us to this distant settlement proved false? Captain Heathcote, you have seen that we come not without sufficient warranty, and it is in my power to say we come not without sufficient—"

Checking himself, as if about to utter more than was prudent, he suddenly cast an eye on the block-house, and demanded its uses.

"It is, as thou seest, a building erected for the purposes of defence," replied Mark; "one to which, in the event of an inroad of the savages, the family may fly for refuge."

"Ah! these citadels are not unknown to me. I have met with others during my journey, but none so formidable or so military as this. It hath a soldier for its governor, and should hold out for a reasonable siege. Being a place of pretension, we will look closer into its mystery."

He then signified an intention to close the search by an examination of this edifice. Content unhesitatingly threw open its door, and invited him to enter.

"On the word of one who, though now engaged in a more peaceful calling, has been a campaigner in his time, 'twould be no child's play to carry this tower without artillery. Had thy spies given notice of our approach, Captain Heathcote, the entrance might have been more difficult than we now find it. We have a ladder here! Where the means of mounting are found, there must be something to

tempt one to ascend. I will taste your forest air from an upper room."

"You will find the apartment above like this below, merely provided for the security of the unoffending dwellers of the habitations," said Content; while he quietly arranged the ladder before the trap, and then led the way himself to the floor above.

"Here have we loops for the musketoons," cried the stranger, looking about him, understandingly, "and reasonable defences against shot. Thou hast not forgotten thy art, Captain Heathcote, and I consider myself fortunate in having entered thy fortress by surprise, or I should rather say, in amity, since the peace is not yet broken between us. But why have we so much of household gear in a place so evidently equipped for war?"

"Thou forgettest that women and children may be driven to this block for a residence," replied Content. "It would show little discretion to neglect matters that might be useful to their wants."

"Is there trouble with the savages?" demanded the stranger, a little quickly; "the gossips of the Colony bade us fear nothing on that head."

"One cannot say at what hour creatures trained in their wild natures may choose to rise. The dwellers on the borders therefore never neglect a fitting caution."

"Hist!" interrupted the stranger; "I hear a footstep above. Ha! the scent will prove true at last! Hilloa, Master Hallam!" he cried, from one of the loops; "let thy statues of salt dissolve, and come hither to the tower. Here is work for a regiment, for well do we know the nature of that we are to deal with."

The sentinel in the court shouted to his companion in the stables; and then openly and boisterously exulting in the prospects of a final success to a search which had hitherto given them useless employment throughout many a long day and weary ride, they rushed together to the block-house.

"Now, worthy lieges of a gracious master," said the leader, when he perceived himself backed by all his armed followers, and speaking with the air of a man flushed with success, "now quickly provide the means of mounting to the upper story. I have thrice heard the tread of man, moving across that floor; though it hath been light and wary, the planks are tell-tales, and have not had their schooling."

Content heard the request, which was uttered sufficiently in the manner of an order, perfectly unmoved. Without betraying either hesitation or concern he disposed himself to comply. Drawing the light ladder through the trap below, he placed it against the one above him, and ascending, he raised the door. He then returned to the floor beneath, making a quiet gesture to imply that they who chose might mount. But the strangers regarded each other with very visible doubts. Neither of the inferiors seemed disposed to precede his chief, and the latter evidently hesitated as to the order in which it was meet to make the necessary advance.

"Is there no other manner of mounting but by this narrow ascent?" he asked.

"None. Thou wilt find the ladder secure, and of no difficult height. It is intended for the use of women and children."

"Aye," muttered the officer; "but your women and children are not called upon to confront the devil in a human form. Fellows, are thy weapons in serviceable condition? Here may be need of spirit ere we get our—Hist! by the divine right of our gracious master! there is truly one stirring above. Harkee, my friend; thou knowest the road so well we will choose to follow thy conduct."

Content, who seldom permitted ordinary events to disturb the equanimity of his temper, quietly assented, and led the way up the ladder, like one who saw no ground for apprehension in the undertaking. The agent of the Crown sprang after him, taking care to keep as near as possible to the person of his leader, and calling to his inferiors to lose no time in backing him with their support. The whole mounted through the trap with an alacrity nothing short of that with which they would have pressed through a dangerous breach; nor did either of the four take time to survey the lodgment he had made, until the whole party was standing in array, with hands grasping the handles of their pistols, or seeking as it were instinctively the hilts of their broadswords.

"By the dark visage of the Stuart!" exclaimed the principal personage, after satisfying himself by a long and disappointed gaze, that what he said was true, "here is naught but an unarmed savage boy!"

"Didst expect to meet else?" demanded the still unmoved Content.

"Hum—that which we expected to meet is sufficiently known to the quaint old gentleman below, and to our own good wisdom. If thou doubtest of our right to look into the very hearts, warranty for that we do can be forthcoming. King Charles hath little cause to be tender of his mercies to the dwellers of these colonies, who lent but too willing ears to the whinings and hypocrisies of the wolves in sheep's clothing, of whom old England hath now so happily gotten rid. Thy buildings shall again be rummaged from the bricks of the chimney-tops to the corner-stone in thy cellars, unless deceit and rebellious cunning shall be abandoned, and the truth proclaimed with the openness and fairness of bold-speaking Englishmen."

"I know not what is called the fairness of bold-speaking Englishmen, since fairness of speech is not a quality of one people or of one land; but well I do know that deceit is sinful, and little of it, I humbly trust, is practised in this settlement. I am ignorant of what is sought, and therefore it cannot be that I meditate treachery."

"Thou hearest, Hallam; he reasoneth on a matter that toucheth the peace and safety of the king!" cried the other, his arrogance of manner increasing with the anger of disappointment. "But why is this dark-skinned boy a prisoner? Dost dare to constitute thyself a sovereign over the natives of this continent, and affect to have shackles and dungeons for such as meet thy displeasure!"

"The lad is in truth a captive; but he has been taken in defence of life, and hath little to complain of more than loss of freedom."

"I will inquire deeply into this proceeding. Though commissioned on an errand of different interest, yet, as one trusted in a matter of moment, I take upon me the office of protecting every oppressed subject of the Crown. There may grow discoveries out of this practice, Hallam, fit to go before the council itself."

"Thou wilt find but little here, worthy of the time and attention of those burdened with the care of a nation," returned Content. "The youthful heathen was found lurking near our habitations the past night; and he is kept where thou seest, that he may not carry the tidings of our condition to his people, who are doubtless outlying in the forest, waiting for the fit moment to work their evil."

"How meanest thou?" hastily exclaimed the other, "at hand in the forest, didst say?"

"There can be little doubt. One young as this would scarce be found distant from the warriors of his tribe ; and that the more especially, as he was taken in the commission of an ambush."

"I hope thy people are not without good provision of arms, and other sufficient muniments of resistance. I trust the palisadoes are firm, and the posterns ingeniously defended."

"We look with a diligent eye to our safety, for it is well known to us dwellers on the borders that there is little security but in untiring watchfulness. The young men were at the gates until the morning, and we did intend to make a strong scouting into the woods as the day advanced, in order to look for those signs that may lead us to conclusions on the number and purposes of those by whom we are environed, had not thy visit called us to our duties."

"And why so tardy in speaking of this intent?" demanded the agent of the king, leading the way down the ladder with suspicious haste. "It is a commendable prudence, and must not be delayed. I take upon me the responsibilities of commanding that all proper care be had in defence of the weaker subjects of the Crown who are here collected. Are our roadsters well replenished, Halam! Duty, as thou sayest, is an imperative master ; it recalls us more into the heart of the Colony. I would it might shortly point the way to Europe!" he muttered as he reached the ground. "Go, fellows ; see to our beasts, and let them be speedily prepared for departure."

The attendants, though men of sufficient spirit in open war, and when it was to be exercised in a fashion to which they were accustomed, had, like other mortals, a wholesome deference for unknown and terrific-looking danger. It is a well-known truth, and one that has been proved by the experience of two centuries, that while the European soldier has ever been readiest to have recourse to the assistance of the terrible warrior of the American forest, he has, in nearly every instance, when retaliation or accident has made him the object instead of the spectator of the ruthless nature of his warfare, betrayed the most salutary, and frequently the most ludicrous apprehension of the prowess of his ally. While Content therefore looked so steadily, though still seriously, at the peculiar danger in which he was placed, the four strangers seemingly saw all of its horrors without any of the known means of avoiding

them. Their chief quickly abandoned the insolence of office, and the tone of disappointment, for a mien of greater courtesy ; and, as policy is often seen suddenly to change the sentiments of even more pretending personages, when interests assume a new aspect, so did his language rapidly take a character of conciliation and courtesy.

The handmaidens were no longer leered at ; the mistress of the dwelling was treated with marked deference ; and the air of deep respect with which even the principal of the party addressed the aged Puritan, bordered on an exhibition of commendable reverence. Something was said in the way of an apology, for the disagreeable obligations of duty, and of a difference between a manner that was assumed to answer secret purposes, and that which nature and a sense of right would dictate ; but neither Mark nor his son appeared to have sufficient interest in the motives of their visitors, to put them to the trouble of repeating explanations that were as awkward to those who uttered them as they were unnecessary to those who listened.

So far from offering any further obstacle to the movements of the family, the borderers were seriously urged to pursue their previous intentions of thoroughly examining the woods. The dwelling was accordingly intrusted, under the orders of the Puritan, to the keeping of about half the laborers, assisted by the Europeans, who clung with instinctive attachment to the possession of the block-house ; their leader repeatedly and rightly enough declaring that though ready at all times to risk life on a plain, he had an unconquerable distaste to putting it in jeopardy in a thicket. Attended by Eben Dudley, Reuben Ring, and two other stout youths, all well though lightly armed, Content then left the palisades, and took his way towards the forest. They entered the woods at the nearest point, always marching with the caution and vigilance that a sense of the true nature of the risk they ran would inspire, and much practice only could properly direct.

The manner of the search was as simple as it was likely to prove effectual. The scouts commenced a circuit round the clearing, extending their line as far as might be done without cutting off support, and each man lending his senses attentively to the signs of the trail, or of the lairs, of those dangerous enemies, who they had reason to think were outlying in their neighborhood. But, like the recent search in the buildings, the scouting was for a long time

attended by no results. Many weary miles were passed slowly over, and more than half their task was ended, and no signs of being having life was met, except the very visible trail of their four guests, and the tracks of a single horse along the path leading to the settlements from the quarter by which the visitor of the previous night had been known to approach. No comments were made by any of the party, as each in succession struck and crossed this path, nearly at the same instant; but a low call from Reuben Ring which soon after met their ears, caused them to assemble in a body at the spot whence the summons had proceeded.

"Here are signs of one passing *from* the clearing," said the quick-eyed woodsman, "and of one too that is not numbered among the family of Wish-Ton-Wish; since his beast hath had a shodden hoof, a mark which belongeth to no animal of ours."

"We will follow," said Content, immediately striking in upon a straggling trail, that by many unequivocal signs had been left by some animal which had passed that way not many hours before. Their search, however, soon drew to a close. Ere they had gone any great distance, they came upon the half-demolished carcass of a dead horse. There was no mistaking the proprietor of this unfortunate animal. Though some beast, or rather beasts of prey, had fed plentifully on the body, which was still fresh and had scarcely yet done bleeding, it was plain, by the remains of the torn equipments, as well as by the color and size of the animal, that it was no other than the hack ridden by the unknown and mysterious guest, who, after sharing in the worship and in the evening meal of the family of Wish-Ton-Wish, had so strangely and so suddenly disappeared. The leathern sack, the weapons which had so singularly riveted the gaze of old Mark, and indeed all but the carcass and a ruined saddle, were gone; but what was left, sufficiently served to identify the animal.

"Here has been the tooth of wolf," said Eben Dudley, stooping to examine into the nature of a ragged wound in the neck; "and here, too, has been cut of knife; but whether by the hand of a red-skin, it exceedeth my art to say."

Each individual of the party now bent curiously over the wound; but the results of their inquiries went no further than to prove that it was undeniably the horse of the stranger, that had forfeited its life. To the fate of its master,

however, there was not the slightest clew. Abandoning the investigation, after a long and fruitless examination, they proceeded to finish the circuit of the clearing. Night had approached ere the fatiguing task was accomplished. As Ruth stood at the postern waiting anxiously for their return, she saw by the countenance of her husband, that while nothing had transpired to give any grounds of additional alarm, no satisfactory testimony had been obtained to explain the nature of the painful doubts, with which, as a tender and sensitive mother, she had been distressed throughout the day.

CHAPTER VII.

“Is there not milking-time,
When you go to bed, or kiln-hole,
To whistle off these secrets ; but you must be
Tattling before all our guests ?”—*Winter's Tale.*

LONG experience hath shown that the white man, when placed in situations to acquire such knowledge, readily becomes the master of most of that peculiar skill for which the North American Indian is so remarkable, and which enables him, among other things, to detect the signs of a forest trail, with a quickness and an accuracy of intelligence that amount nearly to an instinct. The fears of the family were therefore greatly quieted by the reports of the scouts, all of whom agreed in the opinion that no party of savages, that could be at all dangerous to a force like their own, was lying near the valley ; and some of whom, the loudest of which number being stout Eben Dudley, boldly offered to answer for the security of those who depended on their vigilance, with their own lives. These assurances had, beyond a doubt, a soothing influence on the apprehensions of Ruth and her handmaidens ; but they somewhat failed of their effect with those unwelcome visitors who still continued to cumber Wish-Ton-Wish with their presence. Though they had evidently abandoned all ideas connected with the original object of their visit, they spoke not of departure. On the contrary, as night approached, their chief entered into council with old Mark Heathcote, and made certain propositions for the security of his dwelling, which the Puritan saw no reason to oppose.

A regular watch was, in consequence, set, and maintained till morning, at the palisadoes. The different members of the family retired to their usual places of rest, tranquil in appearance, if not in entire confidence of peace; and the military messengers took post in the lower of the two fighting apartments of the citadel. With this simple, and to the strangers particularly satisfactory arrangement, the hours of darkness passed away in quiet; morning returning to the secluded valley, as it had so often done before, with its loveliness unimpaired by violence or tumult.

In the same peaceful manner did the sun set successively three several times, and as often did it arise on the abode of the Heathcotes, without further sign of danger, or motive of alarm. With the passage of time, the agents of the Stuart gradually regained their confidence. Still they never neglected to withdraw within the protection of the block-house with the retiring light; a post which the subordinate named Hallam more than once gravely observed, they were, by their disciplined and military habits, singularly qualified to maintain. Though the Puritan secretly chafed under this protracted visit, habitual self-denial, and a manner so long subdued, enabled him to conceal his disgust. For the first two days after the alarm, the deportment of his guests was unexceptionable. All their faculties appeared to be engrossed with keen and anxious watchings of the forest, out of which it would seem they expected momentarily to see issue a band of ferocious and ruthless savages; but symptoms of returning levity began to be apparent, as confidence and a feeling of security increased, with the quiet passage of the hours.

It was on the evening of the third day from that on which they had made their appearance in the settlement, that the man called Hallam was seen strolling, for the first time, through the postern so often named, and taking a direction which led toward the out-buildings. His air was less distrustful than it had been for many a weary hour, and his step proportionably confident and assuming. Instead of wearing, as he had been wont, a pair of heavy horseman's pistols at his girdle, he had even laid aside his broadsword, and appeared more in the guise of one who sought his personal ease, than in that cumbersome and martial attire which all of his party, until now, had deemed it prudent to maintain. He cast his glance cursorily over the fields of the Heathcotes, as they glowed under the soft

light of a setting sun ; nor did his eye even refuse to wander vacantly along the outline of that forest, which his imagination had so lately been peopling with beings of a fierce and ruthless nature.

The hour was one when rustic economy brings the labors of the day to a close. Among those who were more than usually active at that busy moment, was a hand-maiden of Ruth, whose clear sweet voice was heard, in one of the inclosures, occasionally rising on the notes of a spiritual song, and as often sinking to a nearly inaudible hum, as she extracted from a favorite animal liberal portions of its nightly tribute to the dairy of her mistress. To that inclosure the stranger, as it were by accident, suffered his sauntering footsteps to stroll, seemingly as much in admiration of the sleek herd as of any other of its comely tenants.

"From what thrush hast taken lessons, my pretty maid, that I mistook thy notes for one of the sweetest songsters of thy woods?" he asked, trusting his person to the support of the pen, in an attitude of easy superiority. "One might fancy it a robin, or a wren, trolling out his evening song, instead of human voice, rising and falling in everyday psalmody."

"The birds of our forest rarely speak," returned the girl, "and the one among them which has most to say, does it like those who are called gentlemen, when they set wit to work to please the ear of simple country maidens."

"And in what fashion may that be?"

"Mockery."

"Ah! I have heard of the creature's skill. It is said to be a compound of the harmony of all other forest songsters, and yet I see little resemblance to the honest language of a soldier in its manner of utterance."

"It speaketh without much meaning; and oftener to cheat the ear than in honest reason."

"Thou forgettest that which I told thee in the morning, child. It would seem that they who named thee have no great cause to exult in their judgment of character, since Unbelief would better describe thy disposition than Faith."

"It may be, that they who named me little knew how great must be credulity, to give ear to all I have been required to credit."

"Thou can'st have no difficulty in admitting that thou art comely, since the eye itself will support thy belief; nor can one of so quick speech fail to know that her wit is

sharper than common. Thus far I admit the name of Faith will not surely belie thy character."

"If Eben Dudley hear thee use such vanity-stirring discourse," returned the half-pleased girl, "he might give thee less credit for wit than thou seemest willing to yield to others. I hear his heavy foot among the cattle, and ere long we shall be sure to see a face that hath little more of lightness to boast."

"This Eben Dudley is a personage of no mean importance, I find!" muttered the other, continuing his walk, as the borderer named made his appearance at another entrance of the pen. The glances exchanged between them were far from friendly, though the woodsman permitted the stranger to pass without any oral expression of displeasure.

"The skittish heifer is getting gentle at last, Faith Ring," said the borderer, casting the butt of his musket on the ground with a violence that left a deep impression on the faded sward at his feet. "That brindled ox, old Logger, is not more willing to come into his yoke than is the four-year-old to yield her milk."

"The creature has been getting kind since you taught the manner to tame its humor," returned the dairy girl, in a voice that, spite of every effort of maiden pride, betrayed something of a flurry of her spirits, while she plied her light task with violent industry.

"Umph! I hope some other of my teachings may be as well remembered; but thou art quick at the trick of learning, Faith, as is plain by the ready manner in which thou hast so shortly got the habit of discourse with a man as nimble-tongued as yon riding reprobate from over sea."

"I hope that civil listening is no proof of unseemly discourse on the part of one who hath been trained in modesty of speech, Eben Dudley. Thou hast often said, it was the bounden duty of her who was spoken to, to give ear, lest some might say she was of scornful mind, and her name for pride be better earned than that for good-nature."

"I see that more of my lessons than I had hoped are still in thy keeping. So thou listenest thus readily, Faith, because it is meet that a maiden should not be scornful?"

"Thou sayest so. Whatever ill name I may deserve, thou hast no right to count scorn among my failings."

"If I do, may I—" Eben Dudley bit his lip, and checked an expression which would have given grievous offence to one whose habits of decency were as severe as

those of his companion. "Thou must have heard much that was profitable to-day, Faith Ring," he added, "considering that thy ear is so open, and that thy opportunities have been great."

"I know not what thou would'st say by speaking of my opportunities," returned the girl, bending still lower beneath the object of her industry, in order to conceal the glow which her own quick consciousness told her was burning on her cheek.

"I would say that the tale must be long that needeth four several trials of private speech to finish."

"Four! As I hope to be believed for a girl of truth in speech or deed, this is but the third time that the stranger hath spoken to me apart, since the sun hath risen."

"If I know the number of the fingers of my hand, it is the fourth."

"Nay; how can'st thou, Eben Dudley, who hast been a-field since the crowing of the cock, know what hath passed about the dwellings? It is plain that envy, or some other evil passion, causeth thee to speak angrily."

"How is it that I know! perhaps thou thinkest, Faith, thy brother Reuben only hath the gift of sight."

"The labor must have gone on with great profit to the captain, whilst eyes have been roving over other matters! But perhaps they kept the strong of arm for the lookers-out, and have set them of feebler bodies to the toil."

"I have not been so careless of thy life as to forget, at passing moments, to cast an eye abroad, pert one. Whatever thou mayest think of the need, there would be fine wailings in the butteries and dairies, did the Wampanoags get into the clearing, and there were none to give the alarm in season."

"Truly, Eben, thy terror of the child in the block must be grievous for one of thy manhood, else would'st thou not watch the buildings so narrowly," retorted Faith, laughing; for with the dexterity of her sex, she began to feel the superiority she was gradually obtaining in the discourse. "Thou dost not remember that we have valiant troopers from old England, to keep the youngster from doing harm. But here cometh the brave soldier himself; it will be well to ask vigilance at his hands, or this night may bring us to the tomahawk in our sleep!"

"Thou speakest of the weapon of the savages!" said the messenger, who had drawn near again with a visible willingness to share in an interview which, while he had watched

its progress at a distance, appeared to be growing interesting. "I trust all fear is over from that quarter."

"As you say, for *this* quarter," said Eben, adjusting his lips to a low whistle, and coolly looking up to examine the heavenly body to which he meant allusion. "But the *next* quarter may bring us a pretty piece of Indian skirmishing."

"And what hath the moon in common with an incursion of the savages? Are there those among them who study the secrets of the stars?"

"They study deviltries and other wickedness more than aught else. It is not easy for the mind of man to fancy horrors such as they design, when Providence has given them success in an inroad."

"But thou did'st speak of the moon! In what manner is the moon leagued with their bloody plots?"

"We have her now in the full, and there is little of the night when the eye of a watcher might not see a red-skin in the clearing; but a different tale may be heard, when an hour or two of jet darkness shall again fall among these woods. There will be a change shortly; it behooveth us therefore to be on our guard."

"Thou thinkest then, truly, that there are outlyers waiting for the fitting moment?" said the officer, with an interest so marked as to cause even the but-half-pacified Faith to glance an arch look at her companion, though he still had reason to distrust a wilful expression that lurked in the corner of her eyes, which threatened at each moment to contradict his relation of the sinister omens.

"There may be savages lying in the hills at a day's journey in the forest; but they know the aim of a white man's musket too well to be sleeping within reach of its range. It is the nature of an Indian to eat and sleep while he has time for quiet, and to fast and murder when the killing hour hath come."

"And what call you the distance to the nearest settlement on the Connecticut?" demanded the other, with an air so studiously indifferent as to furnish an easy clue to the inner workings of his mind.

"Some twenty hours would bring a nimble runner to the outer habitations, granting small time for food and rest. He that is wise, however, will take but little of the latter, until his head be safely housed within some such building as ycn block, or until there shall stand between him and the forest at least a goodly row of oaken pickets."

"There is no path ridden by which travellers may avoid the forest during the darkness?"

"I know of none. He who quits Wish-Ton-Wish for the towns below must make his pillow of the earth, or be fain to ride as long as beast can carry him."

"We have truly had experience of this necessity journeying hither. Thou thinkest, friend, that the savages are in their resting time, and that they wait the coming quarter of the moon?"

"To my seeming, we shall not have them sooner," returned Eben Dudley; taking care to conceal all qualification of this opinion, if any such he entertained, by closely locking its purport in a mental reservation.

"And what season is it usual to choose for getting into the saddle, when business calls any to the settlements below?"

"We never fail to take our departure about the time the sun touches the tall pine which stands on yonder height of the mountain. Much experience hath told us it is the safest hour; hand of timepiece is not more sure than yon tree."

"I like the night," said the other, looking about him with the air of one suddenly struck with the promising appearance of the weather. "The blackness no longer hangs about the forest, and it seems a fitting moment to push the matter on which we are sent nearer to its conclusion."

So saying, and probably believing that he had sufficiently concealed the motives of his decision, the uneasy dragoon walked with an air of soldierly coolness towards the dwellings, signing at the same time to one of his companions, who was regarding him from a distance, to approach.

"Now dost thou believe, witless Dudley, that the four fingers of thy clumsy hand have numbered the full amount of all that thou callest my listenings?" said Faith, when she thought no other ear but his to whom she spoke could catch her words, and at the same time laughing merrily beneath her heifer, though still speaking with a vexation she could not entirely repress.

"Have I spoken aught but truth? It is not for such as I to give lessons in journeying to one who follows the honest trade of a man-hunter. I have said that which all who dwell in these parts know to be reasonable."

"Surely naught else. But truth is made so powerful in thy hands, that it needs to be taken, like a bitter healing

draught, with closed eyes and at many swallows. One who drinketh of it too freely may well-nigh be strangled. I marvel that he who is so vigilant in providing for the cares of others, should take so little heed of those he is sent to guard."

"I know not thy meaning, Faith. When was danger near the valley and my musket wanting?"

"The good piece is truer to duty than its master. Thou mayest have lawful license to sleep on thy post, for we maidens know nothing of the pleasure of the captain in these matters; but it would be as seemly, if not as soldierly, to place the arms at the postern and thyself in the chambers, when next thou hast need of watching and sleeping in the same hour."

Dudley looked as confused as one of his mould and unbending temperament might well be, though he stubbornly refused to understand the allusion of his offended companion.

"Thou hast not discussed with the trooper from over sea in vain," he said, "since thou speakest so wisely of watches and arms."

"Truly he hath much schooled me in the matter."

"Umph! and what may be the amount of his teaching?"

"That he who sleepeth at a postern should neither talk too boldly of the enemy, nor expect maidens to put too much trust——"

"In what, Faith?"

"Thou surely knowest. I mean in his watchfulness. My life on it, had one happened to pass at a later hour than common near the night-post of that gentle-spoken soldier, he would not have been found like a sentinel of this household, in the second watch of the night that was gone, dreaming of the good things of Madam's buttery."

"Didst truly come then, girl?" said Eben, dropping his voice, and equally manifesting his satisfaction and his shame. "But thou knowest, Faith, that the labor had fallen behind in behalf of the scouting party, and that the toil of yesterday exceeded that of our usual burdens. Nevertheless, I keep the postern again to-night, from eight to twelve, and——"

"Will make a goodly rest of it, I doubt not. Now he who hath been so vigilant throughout the day must needs tire of the task as night draws on. Fare thee well, wakeful Dudley; if thine eyes should open on the morrow, be

thankful that the maidens have not stitched thy garments to the palisadoes."

Notwithstanding the efforts of the young man to detain her, the light-footed girl eluded his grasp, and bearing her burden towards the dairy, she tripped along the path with a half-averted face, in which triumph and repentance were already struggling for the possession.

In the meantime the leader of the messengers and his military subordinate had a long and interesting conference. When it was ended, the former took his way to the apartment in which Mark Heathcote was wont to pass those portions of his time that were not occupied in his secret strivings for the faith, or in exercise without, while superintending the laborers in the fields. With some little circumlocution, which was intended to mask his real motives, the agent of the king announced his intention to take his final departure that very night.

"I felt it a duty, as one who has gained experience in arms by some practice in the wars of Europe," he said, "to tarry in thy dwelling while danger threatened from the lurking savage. It would ill become soldiers to speak of their intentions; but had the alarm in truth sounded, thou wilt give faith when I say that the block-house would not have been lightly yielded! I shall make report to them that sent me, that in Captain Mark Heathcote, Charles hath a loyal subject, and the Constitution a firm supporter. The rumors, of a seemingly mistaken description, which have led us hither, shall be contradicted, and doubtless it will be found that some accident hath given rise to the deception. Should there be occasion to dwell on the particulars of the late alarm, I trust the readiness of my followers to do good service to one of the king's subjects will not be overlooked."

"It is the striving of an humble spirit to speak naught evil of its fellows, and to conceal no good," returned the reserved Puritan. "If thou hast found thy abode in my dwelling to thy liking, thou art welcome, and if duty or pleasure calleth thee to quit it, peace go with thee. It will be useful to unite with us in asking that thy passage through the wilderness may be unharmed; that He who watcheth over the meanest of his creatures should take thee in his especial keeping, and that the savage heathen —"

"Dost think the savage out of his villages?" demanded the messenger, with an indecorous rapidity that cut short

the enumeration of the particular blessings and dangers that his host thought it meet to include in the leave-taking prayer.

"Thou surely hast not tarried with us to aid in the defence, and yet feel it doubtful that thy services might be useful!" observed Mark Heathcote, dryly.

"I would the Prince of Darkness had thee and all the other diabolicals of these woods in his own good gripe!" muttered the messenger between his teeth; and then, as if guided by a spirit that could not long be quelled, he assumed something more of his unbridled and natural air, boldly declining to join in the prayer on the plea of haste, and the necessity of his looking in person to the movements of his followers. "But this need not prevent thee, worthy captain, from pouring out an asking in our behalf while we are in the saddle," he concluded; "for ourselves, there remaineth much of thy previously-bestowed pious aliment to be digested, though we doubt not that should thy voice be raised in our behalf, while journeying along the first few leagues of the forest, the tread of the hacks would not be heavier, and it is certainty that we ourselves should be none the worse for the favor."

Then casting a glance of ill-concealed levity at one of his followers who had come to say that their steeds awaited, he made the parting salutation with an air in which the respect that one like the Puritan could scarce fail to excite, struggled with his habitual contempt for things of a serious character.

The family of Mark Heathcote, the lowest dependent included, saw these strangers depart with inward satisfaction. Even the maidens, in whom nature, in moments weaker than common, had awakened some of the lighter vanities, were gladly rid of gallants who could not soothe their ears with the unction of flattery without frequently giving great offence to their severe principles, by light and irreverent allusions to things on which they themselves were accustomed to think with fitting awe. Eben Dudley could scarcely conceal the chuckle with which he saw the party bury themselves in the forest, though neither he nor any of the more instructed in such matters, believed they incurred serious risk from their sudden enterprise.

The opinion of the scouts proved to be founded on accurate premises. That and many a subsequent night passed without alarm. The season continued to advance, and the laborers pursued their toil to its close without an-

other appeal to their courage, or any additional reasons for vigilance. Whittal Ring followed his colts with impunity among the recesses of the neighboring forests, and the herds of the family went and came as long as the weather would permit them to range the woods, in regularity and peace. The period of the alarm and the visit of the agents of the Crown came to be food for tradition, and during the succeeding winter the former often furnished motive of merriment around the blazing fires that were so necessary to the country and the season.

Still there existed in the family a living memorial of the unusual incidents of that night. The captive remained long after the events which had placed him in the power of the Heathcotes were beginning to be forgotten.

A desire to quicken the seeds of spiritual regeneration, which, however dormant they might be, old Mark Heathcote believed to exist in the whole family of man, and consequently in the young heathen as well as in others, had become a sort of ruling passion in the Puritan. The fashions and mode of thinking of the times had a strong leaning toward superstition, and it was far from difficult for a man of his ascetic habits and exaggerated doctrines to believe that a special interposition had cast the boy into his hands for some hidden but mighty purpose, that time in the good season would not fail to reveal.

Notwithstanding the strong coloring of fanaticism which tinged the character of the religionists of those days, they were rarely wanting in worldly discretion. The agents they saw fit to employ in order to aid the more hidden purposes of Providence, were in common useful and rational. Thus, while Mark never forgot to summon the lad from his prison at the hour of prayer, or to include an especial asking in behalf of the ignorant heathen in general and of this chosen youth in particular, he hesitated to believe that a manifest miracle would be exerted in his favor. That no blame might attach to the portion of duty that was confided to human means, he had recourse to the discreet agency of kindness and unremitted care. But all attempts to lure the lad into the habits of a civilized man were completely unsuccessful. As the severity of the weather increased, the compassionate and thoughtful Ruth endeavored to induce him to adopt the garments that were found so necessary to the comfort of men who were greatly his superiors in hardihood and in strength. Clothes decorated in a fashion suited to the taste of an Indian were considerably

provided, and entreaties and threats were both freely used, with a view to make the captive wear them. On one occasion he was even forcibly clad by Eben Dudley; and being brought in the unwonted guise into the presence of old Mark, the latter offered up an especial petition that the youth might be made to feel the merit of this concession to the principles of a chastened and instructed man. But within an hour the stout woodsman, who had been made on the occasion so active an instrument of civilization, announced to the admiring Faith that the experiment was unsuccessful; or, as Eben somewhat irreverently described the extraordinary effort of the Puritan, "the heathen hath already resumed his skin leggings and painted waist-cloth, notwithstanding the captain hath strove to pin better garments on his back, by virtue of a prayer that might have clothed the nakedness of a whole tribe." In short, the result proved in the case of this lad, as similar experiments have since proved in so many other instances, the difficulty of tempting one trained in the freedom and ease of a savage, to consent to admit of the restraints of a state of being that is commonly thought to be so much superior. In every instance in which the youthful captive had liberty of choice, he disdainfully rejected the customs of the whites, adhering with a singular and almost heroic pertinacity to the usages of his people and his condition.

The boy was not kept in his bondage without extraordinary care. Once, when trusted in the fields, he had openly attempted to escape; nor was the possession of his person recovered without putting the speed of Eben Dudley and Reuben Ring to a more severe trial, as was confessed by the athletic young borderers themselves, than any they had hitherto undergone. From that moment, he was never permitted to pass the palisadoes. When duty called the laborers afield, the captive was invariably secured in his prison, where, as some compensation for his confinement, he was supposed to enjoy the benefit of long and familiar communication with Mark Heathcote, who had the habit of passing many hours of each day, and not unfrequently long portions of the night too, within the retirement of the block-house. During the time only when the gates were closed, or when some one of strength and activity sufficient to control his movements was present, was the latter permitted to stroll at will among the buildings of the border fortress. This liberty he never failed to ex-

ercise, and often in a manner that overcame the affectionate Ruth with a painful excess of sensibility.

Instead of joining in the play of the other children, the young captive would stand aloof, and regard their sports with a vacant eye, or, drawing near to the palisadoes, he often passed hours in gazing wistfully at those endless forests in which he first drew breath, and which probably contained all that was most prized in the estimation of his simple judgment. Ruth, touched to the heart by this silent but expressive exhibition of suffering, endeavored in vain to win his confidence, with a view of enticing him into employments that might serve to relieve his care. The resolute but still quiet boy would not be lured into a forgetfulness of his origin. He appeared to comprehend the kind intentions of his gentle mistress, and frequently he even suffered himself to be led by the mother into the centre of her own joyous and merry offspring ; but it was only to look upon their amusements with his former cold air, and to return, at the first opportunity, to his beloved site at the pickets. Still there were singular and even mysterious evidences of a growing consciousness of the nature of the discourse of which he was occasionally an auditor, that would have betrayed greater familiarity with the language and opinions of the inhabitants of the valley, than his known origin and his absolute withdrawal from communication could give reason to expect. This important and inexplicable fact was proved by the frequent and meaning glances of his dark eye, when aught was uttered in his hearing that affected, ever so remotely, his own condition ; and, once or twice, by the haughty gleamings of ferocity that escaped him, when Eben Dudley was heard to vaunt the prowess of the white men in their encounters with the original owners of the country. The Puritan did not fail to note these symptoms of a budding intelligence, as the pledges of a fruit that would more than reward his pious toil ; and they served to furnish a great relief to certain occasional repugnance, which all his zeal could not entirely subdue, at being the instrument of causing so much suffering to one who, after all, had inflicted no positive wrong on himself.

At the period of which we are writing, the climate of these States differed materially from that which is now known to their inhabitants. A winter in the Province of Connecticut was attended by many successive falls of snow, until the earth was entirely covered with firmly compressed

masses of the frozen element. Occasional thaws and passing storms of rain, that were driven away by a return of the clear and cutting cold of the northwestern gales, were wont at times to lay a covering on the ground, that was congealed to the consistency of ice, until men, and not unfrequently beasts, and sometimes sleighs, were seen moving on its surface, as on the bed of a frozen lake. During the extremity of a season like this, the hardy borderers, who could not toil in their customary pursuits, were wont to range the forest in quest of game, which, driven for food to known resorting places in the woods, then fell most easily a prey to the intelligence and skill of such men as Eben Dudley and Reuben Ring.

The youths never left the dwellings on these hunts, without exciting the most touching interest in their movements, on the part of the Indian boy. On all such occasions he would linger at the loops of his prison throughout the day, listening intently to the reports of the distant muskets, as they resounded in the forest; and the only time during a captivity of so many months, that he was ever seen to smile, was when he examined the grim look and muscular claws of a dead panther, that had fallen beneath the aim of Dudley, in one of these excursions to the mountains. The compassion of all the borderers was powerfully awakened in behalf of the patient and dignified young sufferer, and gladly would they have given their captive the pleasure of joining in the chase, had not the task been one that was far from easy of accomplishment. The former of the woodsmen just mentioned had even volunteered to lead him like a hound in a leash; but this was a species of degradation against which it was certain that a young Indian, ambitious of the character and jealous of the dignity of a warrior, would have openly rebelled.

The quick interest of the observant Ruth had, as it has been seen, early detected a growing intelligence in the boy. The means by which one, who never mingled in the employments, and who rarely seemed to listen to the dialogues of the family, could come to comprehend the meaning of a language that is found sufficiently difficult for a scholar, were, however, as much of a mystery to her as to all around her. Still, by the aid of that instinctive tact which so often enlightens the mind of woman, was she certain of the fact. Profiting by this knowledge, she assumed the task of endeavoring to obtain an honorary pledge from

her protégé, that, if permitted to join the hunters, he would return to the valley at the end of the day. But though the language of the woman was gentle as her own kind nature, and her entreaties that he would give some evidence of having comprehended her meaning were zealous and oft repeated, not the smallest symptom of intelligence, on this occasion, could be extracted from her pupil. Disappointed, and not without sorrow, Ruth had abandoned her compassionate design in despair, when, on a sudden, the old Puritan, who had been a silent spectator of her fruitless efforts, announced his faith in the integrity of the lad, and his intention to permit him to make one of the very next party that should leave the habitation.

The cause of this sudden change in the hitherto stern watchfulness of Mark Heathcote was, like so many other of his impulses, a secret in his own bosom. It has just been said, that during the time Ruth was engaged in her kind and fruitless experiment to extract some evidence of intelligence from the boy, the Puritan was a close and interested observer of her efforts. He appeared to sympathize in her disappointment, but the weal of those unconverted tribes who were to be led from the darkness of their ways by the instrumentality of this youth, was far too important to admit the thought of rashly losing the vantage-ground he had gained, in the gradually-expanding intellect of the boy, by running the hazard of an escape. To all appearance, the intention of permitting him to quit the defences had therefore been entirely abandoned, when old Mark so suddenly announced a change of resolution. The conjectures on the causes of this unlooked-for determination were exceedingly various. Some believed that the Puritan had been favored with a mysterious intimation of the pleasure of Providence in the matter; and others thought that, beginning to despair of success in his undertaking, he was willing to seek for a more visible manifestation of its purposes, by hazarding the experiment of trusting the boy to the direction of his own impulses. All appeared to be of opinion that if the lad returned, the circumstance might be set down to the intervention of a miracle. Still, with his resolution once taken, the purpose of Mark Heathcote remained unchanged. He announced this unexpected intention after one of his long and solitary visits to the block-house, where it is possible he had held a powerful spiritual strife on the occasion; and, as the weather was exceedingly favorable for such an object, he

commanded his dependents to prepare to make the sortie on the following morning.

A sudden and an uncontrollable gleam of delight flashed on the dark features of the captive, when Ruth was about to place in his hands the bow of her own son, and, by signs and words, she gave him to understand that he was to be permitted to use it in the free air of the forest. But the exhibition of pleasure disappeared as quickly as it had been betrayed. When the lad received the weapons, it was rather with the manner of a hunter accustomed to their use, than of one to whose hands they had so long been strangers. As he left the gates of Wish-Ton-Wish, the handmaidens of Ruth clustered about him, in wondering interest; for it was strange to see a youth so long guarded with jealous care, again free and unwatched. Notwithstanding their ordinary dependence on the secret lights and great wisdom of the Puritan, there was a very general impression that the lad, around whose presence there was so much that was mysterious and of interest to their own security, was now to be gazed upon for the last time. The boy himself was unmoved to the last. Still he paused, with his foot on the threshold of the dwelling, and appeared to regard Ruth and her young offspring with momentary concern. Then, assuming the calm air of an Indian warrior, he suffered his eye to grow cold and vacant, following with a nimble step the hunters who were already passing without the palisadoes.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Well, I am your theme; you have the start of me. I am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel; ignorance itself is a plummet over me: use me as you will.”—*Merry Wives of Windsor*.

POETS, aided by the general longing of human nature, have given a reputation to the spring that it rarely merits. Though this imaginative class of writers have said so much of its balmy airs and odoriferous gales, we find it nearly everywhere the most reluctant, churlish, and fickle of the four seasons. It is the youth of the year, and, like that probationary period of life, most fitted to afford the promise of better things. There is a constant struggle between reality and hope throughout the whole of this slow-moving

and treacherous period, which has an unavoidable tendency to deceive. All that is said of its grateful productions is fallacious, for the earth is as little likely to yield a generous tribute without the quickening influence of the summer heats, as man is wont to bring forth commendable fruits without the agency of a higher moral power than any he possesses in virtue of his innate propensities. On the other hand, the fall of the year possesses a sweetness, a repose, and a consistency, which may be justly likened to the decline of a well spent life. It is, in all countries and in every climate, the period when physical and moral causes unite to furnish the richest sources of enjoyment. If the spring is the time of hope, autumn is the season of fruition. There is just enough of change to give zest to the current of existence, while there is too little of vicissitude to be pregnant of disappointment. Succeeding to the nakedness of winter, the spring is grateful by comparison; while the glories of autumn are enjoyed after the genial powers of summer have been lavishly expended.

In obedience to this great law of the earth, let poets sing and fancy as they may, the spring and autumn of America partake largely of the universally distinctive characters of the rival seasons. What nature has done on this continent has not been done niggardly; and, while we may boast of a decline of the year that certainly rivals, and, with few exceptions, eclipses the glories of most of the climates of the old world, the opening months rarely fail of equalizing the gifts of Providence, by a very decided exhibition of all the disagreeable qualities for which they are remarkable.

More than half a year had elapsed, between the time when the Indian boy had been found lurking in the valley of the Heathcotes, and that day when he was first permitted to go into the forest, fettered by no other restraint than the moral tie which the owner of the valley either knew, or fancied, would not fail to cause him to return to a bondage he had found so irksome. It was April; but it was April as the month was known a century ago in Connecticut, and as it is even now so often found to disappoint all expectations of that capricious season of the year. The weather had returned suddenly and violently to the rigor of winter. A thaw had been succeeded by a storm of snow and sleet, and the interlude of the spring-time of blossoms had terminated with a biting gale from the northwest, which had apparently placed a perma-

ment seal on the lingering presence of a second February.

On the morning that Content led his followers into the forest, they issued from the postern clad in coats of skin. Their lower limbs were protected by the coarse leggings which they had worn in so many previous hunts during the past winter, if that might be called past which had returned, weakened but little of its keenness, and bearing all the outward marks of January. When last seen, Eben Dudley, the heaviest of the band, was moving firmly on the crust of the snow, with a step as sure as if he had trodden on the frozen earth itself. More than one of the maidens declared, that though they had endeavored to trace the footsteps of the hunters from the palisadoes, it would have exceeded even the sagacity of an Indian eye to follow their trail along the icy path they travelled.

Hour after hour passed without bringing tidings from the chase. The reports of fire-arms had indeed been occasionally heard, ringing among the arches of the woods; and broken echoes were, for some hours, rolling from one recess of the hills to another. But even these signs of the presence of the hunters gradually receded with the advance of the day; and, long ere the sun had gained the meridian, and its warmth, at that advanced season not without power, was shed into the valley, the whole range of the adjoining forest lay in its ordinary dull and solemn silence.

The incident of the hunt, apart from the absence of the Indian boy, was one of too common occurrence to give birth to any particular motives of excitement. Ruth quietly busied herself among her women, and when the recollection of those who were scouring the neighboring forest came at all to her mind, it was coupled with the care with which she was providing to administer to their comforts, after the fatigue of a day of extraordinary personal efforts. This was a duty never lightly performed. Her situation was one eminently fitted to foster the best affections of woman, since it admitted of few temptations to yield to other than the most natural feeling; she was, in consequence, known on all occasions to exercise them with the devotedness of her sex.

"Thy father and his companions will look on our care with pleasure," said the thoughtful matron to her youthful image, as she directed a more than usual provision of her larder to be got in readiness for the hunters; "home is ever sweetest after toil and exposure."

"I doubt if Mark be not ready to faint with so weary a march," said the child already introduced by the name of Martha; "he is young to go into the woods, with scouts tall as great Dudley."

"And the heathen," added the little Ruth, "he is young, too, as Mark, though more used to the toil. It may be, mother, that he will never come to us more!"

"That would grieve our venerable parent; for thou knowest, Ruth, that he hath hopes of working on the mind of the boy, until his savage nature shall yield to the secret power. But the sun is falling behind the hill, and the evening is coming in cool as winter; go to the postern, and look out upon the fields. I would know if there be any signs of thy father and his party."

Though Ruth gave this mandate to her daughter, she did not the less neglect to exercise her own faculties in the same grateful office. While the children went, as they were ordered, to the outer gate, the matron herself ascended to the lower apartment of the block, and, from its different loops, she took a long and anxious survey of the limited prospect. The shadows of the trees that lined the western side of the view, were already thrown far across the broad sheet of frozen show, and the sudden chill which succeeded the disappearance of the sun announced the rapid approach of a night that promised to support the severe character of the past day. A freezing wind, which had brought with it the cold airs of the great lakes, and which had even triumphed over the more natural influence of an April sun, had, however, fallen, leaving a temperature not unlike that which dwells in the milder seasons of the year among the glaciers of the upper Alps.

Ruth was too long accustomed to such forest scenes, and to such a "lingering of winter in the lap of May," to feel, on their account, any additional uneasiness. But the hour had now arrived when she had reason to look for the return of the hunters. With the expectation of seeing their forms issuing from the forest, came the anxiety which is an unavoidable attendant of disappointment. The shadows continued to deepen in the valley, until the gloom thickened to the darkness of night, without bringing any tidings from those without.

When a delay, which was unusual in the members of a family circumstanced like that of the Wish-Ton-Wish, came to be coupled with various little observations that had been made during the day, it was thought that reasons for alarm

were beginning, at each instant, to grow more plausible. Reports of fire-arms had been heard, at an early hour, from opposite points in the hills, and in a manner too distinct to be mistaken for echoes ; a certain proof that the different members of the hunt had separated in the forest. Under such circumstances, it was not difficult for the imagination of a wife and a mother, of a sister, or of her who secretly confessed a still more tender interest in some one of the hunters, to conjure to the imagination the numberless dangers to which those who were engaged in these expeditions were known to be exposed.

"I doubt that the chase hath drawn them further from the valley than is fitting for the hour and the season," observed Ruth to her maidens, who had gathered in a group about her, at a point that overlooked as much of the cleared land around the buildings as the darkness would allow ; "the gravest man becomes thoughtless as the unreflecting child, when led by the eagerness of the pursuit. It is the duty of older heads to think for those that want experience—but into what indiscreet complaints are my fears leading ! It may be that my husband is even now striving to collect his party, in order to return. Have any heard his conch sounding the recall ?"

"The woods are still as the day the first echo of the axe was heard among the trees," returned Faith. "I did hear that which sounded like a strain of brawling Dudley's songs, but it proved to be no more than the lowing of one of his own oxen. Perchance the animal misseeth some of his master's care."

"Whittal Ring hath looked to the beasts, and it may not be that he hath neglected to feed, among others, the creatures of Dudley. Thy mind is given to levity, Faith, in the matter of this young man. It is not seemly that one of thy years and sex should manifest so great displeasure at the name of a youth, who is of an honest nature, and of honest habits, too, though he may appear ungainly to the eye, and have so little favor with one of thy disposition."

"I did not fashion the man," said Faith, biting her lip, and tossing her head ; "nor is it aught to me whether he be gainly or not. As to my favor, when he asks it, the man shall not wait long to know the answer. But is not yon figure the fellow himself, Madame Heathcote ?—here, coming in from the eastern hill, along the orchard path. The form I mean is just here ; you may see it, at this moment, turning by the bend in the brook."

"There is one of a certainty, and it should be one of our hunting party, too; and yet he doth not seem to be of a size or of a gait like that of Eben Dudley. Thou should'st have a knowledge of thy kindred, girl; to me it seemeth thy brother."

"Truly, it may be Reuben Ring; still it hath much of the swagger of the other, though their stature be nearly equal; the manner of carrying the musket is much the same with all the borderers too; one cannot easily tell the form of a man from a stump, by this light, and yet do I think it will prove to be the loitering Dudley."

"Loiterer or not, he is the first to return from this long and weary chase," said Ruth, breathing heavily, like one who regretted that the truth were so. "Go thou to the postern, and admit him, girl. I ordered bolts to be drawn, for I like not to leave a fortress defended by a female garrison, at this hour, with open gates. I will hie to the dwelling and see to the comforts of those who are a-hungred, since it will not be long ere we shall have more of them at hand."

Faith complied, with affected indifference and sufficient delay. By the time she had reached the place of admission, a form was seen ascending the acclivity, and taking the direction which led to the same spot. In the next minute a rude effort to enter announced an arrival without.

"Gently, Master Dudley," said the wilful girl, who held the bolt with one hand, though she maliciously delayed to remove it. "We know thou art powerful of arm, and yet the palisades will scarcely fall at thy touch. Here are no Sampsons to pull down the pillars on our heads. Perhaps we may not be disposed to give entrance to them who stay abroad out of all season."

"Open the postern, girl," said Eben Dudley; "after which, if thou hast aught to say, we shall be better inconvenienced for discourse."

"It may be that thy conversation is most agreeable when heard from without. Render an account of thy backslidings, throughout this day, penitent Dudley, that I may take pity on thy weariness. But lest hunger should have overcome thy memory, I may serve to help thee to the particulars. The first of thy offences was to consume more than thy portion of the cold meats; the second was to suffer Reuben Ring to kill the deer, and for thee to claim it; and a third was a trick thou hast of listening so much

to thine own voice, that even the beasts fled thee, from dislike of thy noise."

"Thou triflest unseasonably, Faith; I would speak with the captain without delay."

"It may be that he is better employed than to desire such company. Thou art not the only strange animal by many who hath roared at the gate of Wish-Ton-Wish."

"Have any come within the day, Faith?" demanded the borderer, with the interest such an event would be likely to create in the mind of one who habitually lived in so great retirement.

"What sayest thou to a second visit from the gentle-spoken stranger? he who favored us with so much gay discourse, the by-gone fall of the year. That would be a guest fit to receive! I warrant me his knock would not be heard a second time."

"The gallant had better beware the moon!" exclaimed Dudley, striking the butt of his musket against the ice with so much force as to cause his companion to start in alarm. "What fool's errand hath again brought him to prick his nag so deep into the forest?"

"Nay, thy wit is ever like the unbroken colt, a head-strong run-away. I said not, in full meaning, that the man had come; I only invited thee to give an opinion in the event that he should arrive unexpectedly, though I am far from certain that any here ever expect to see his face again."

"This is foolish prating," returned the youth, provoked at the exhibition of jealousy into which he had been incautiously betrayed. "I tell thee to withdraw the bolt, for I have great need to speak with the captain, or with his son."

"Thou may'st open thy mind to the first, if he will listen to what thou hast to say," returned the girl, removing the impediment to his entrance; "but thou wilt sooner get the ear of the other by remaining at the gate, since he has not yet come in from the forest."

Dudley recoiled a pace, and repeated her words in the tone of one who admitted a feeling of alarm to mingle with his surprise.

"Not in from the forest!" he said; "surely there are none abroad, now that I am home!"

"Why dost say it? I have put my jibe upon thee more in payment of ancient transgressions than for any present offence. So far from being last, thou art the first of the

hunters we have yet seen. Go in to the Madam without delay, and tell her of the danger, if any there be, that we take speedy measures for our safety."

"That would do little good, truly," muttered the borderer, like one musing. "Stay thou here, and watch the postern, Faith; I will back to the woods; for a timely word or a signal blow from my conch might quicken their footsteps."

"What madness hath beset thee, Dudley! Thou would'st not go into the forest again, at this hour, and alone, if there be reason for fear! Come further within the gate, man, that I may draw the bolt. The Madam will wonder that we tarry here so long."

"Ha!—I hear feet moving in the meadow; I know it by the creaking of the snow; the others are not lagging."

Notwithstanding the apparent certainty of the young man, instead of going forth to meet his friends, he withdrew a step, and with his own hand drew the bolt that Faith had just desired might be fastened; taking care at the same time to let fall a swinging bar of wood, which gave additional security to the fastenings of the postern. His apprehensions, if any such had induced this caution, were however unnecessary; for ere he had time to make, or even to reflect on any further movement, admission was demanded in the well-known voice of the son of him who owned the valley. The bustle of the arrival—for with Content entered a group of companions loaded with venison, put an end to the dialogue. Faith seized the opportunity to glide away in the obscurity, in order to announce to her mistress that the hunters had returned—an office that she performed without entering at all into the particulars of her own interview with Eben Dudley.

It is needless to dwell on the satisfaction with which Ruth received her husband and son, after the uneasiness she had just suffered. Though the severe manners of the province admitted of no violent exhibition of passing emotions, secret joy was reigning in the mild eyes, and glowing about the flushed cheeks of the discreet matron, while she personally officiated in the offices of the evening meal.

The party had returned, teeming with no extraordinary incidents; nor did they appear to be disturbed with any of that seriousness of air which had so unequivocally characterized the deportment of him who had preceded them. On the contrary, each had his quiet tale to relate, now perhaps at the expense of a luckless companion, and some

times in order that no part of his own individual skill as a hunter should be unknown. The delay was accounted for, as similar delays are commonly explained, by distance and the temptations of an unusually successful chase. As the appetites of those who had spent the day in the exciting toil were keen, and the viands tempting, the first half-hour passed quickly, as all such half-hours are wont to pass, in garrulous recitals of personal exploits, and of the hair-breadth escapes of deer, which, had fortune not been fickle, should have now been present as trophies of the skill of the hand by which they fell. It was only after personal vanity was sufficiently appeased, and when the hunger even of a border-man could achieve no more, that the hunters began to look about them with a diminished excitement, and to discuss the events of the day with a fitting calmness, and with a discretion more suited to their ordinary self-command.

"We lost the sound of thy conch, wandering Dudley, as we fell into the deep hollow of the mountain," said Content, in a pause of the discourse; "since which time, neither eye nor ear of any has had trace of thy movements, until we met thee at the postern, stationed like a looker-out on his watch."

The individual addressed had mingled in none of the gayety of the hour. While others fed freely, or joined in the quiet joke, which could escape the lips of even men chastened as his companions, Eben Dudley had tasted sparingly of the viands. Nor had the muscles of his hard countenance once relaxed in a smile. A gravity and a silence so extraordinary, in one so little accustomed to exhibit either quality, did not fail to attract attention. It was universally ascribed to the circumstance that he had returned empty-handed from the hunt; and now that one having authority had seen fit to give such a direction to the discourse, the imaginary delinquent was not permitted to escape unscathed.

"The butcher had little to do with this day's killing," said one of the young men; "as a punishment for his absence from the slaughter, he should be made to go on the hill and bring in the two bucks he will find hanging from a maple sapling near to the drinking spring. Our meat should pass through his hands in some fashion or other, else will it lack savor."

"Ever since the death of the straggling wether, the trade of Eben hath been at a stand," added another; "the down-

hearted youth seems like one ready to give up his calling to the first stranger that shall ask it."

"Creatures which run at large prove better mutton than the stalled wether," continued a third ; "and thereby custom was getting low before this hunt. Beyond a doubt, he has a full supply for all who shall be likely to seek venison in his stall."

Ruth observed the countenance of her husband grew grave, at these allusions to an event he had always seemed to wish forgotten ; and she interposed with a view to lead the minds of those who listened, back to matter more fitting to be discussed.

"How is this ?" she exclaimed in haste ; "hath the stout Dudley lost any of his craft ? I have never counted with greater certainty on the riches of the table, than when he hath been sent among the hills for the fat deer or the tender turkey. It would much grieve me to learn that he beginneth to lack the hunter's skill."

"The man is getting melancholy with over-feeding," muttered the wilful tones of one busied among the vessels in a distant part of the room. "He taketh his exercise alone, in order that none need discover the failing. I think he be much disposed to go over sea, in order to become a trooper."

Until now, the subject of these mirthful attacks had listened like one too confident of his established reputation to feel concern, but at the sound of the last speaker's voice, he grasped the bushy covering of one entire cheek in his hand, and turning a reproachful and irritated glance at the already half-repentant eye of Faith Ring, all his natural spirit returned.

"It may be that my skill hath left me," he said, "and that I love to be alone, rather than to be troubled with the company of some that might readily be named, no reference being had to such gallants as ride up and down the colony, putting evil opinions into the thoughts of honest men's daughters ; but why is Eben Dudley to bear all the small shot of your humors, when there is another who, it might seem, hath strayed even further from your trail than he ?"

Eye sought eye, and each youth by hasty glances endeavored to read the countenances of all the rest of the company, in order to learn who the absentee might be. The young borderers shook their heads, as the features of every well-known face were recognized, and a general ex-

climation of denial was about to break from their lips, when Ruth exclaimed—

“Truly, the Indian is wanting!”

So constant was the apprehension of danger from the savages, in the breasts of those who dwelt on that exposed frontier, that every man arose at the words, by a sudden and common impulse, and each individual gazed about him in a surprise that was a little akin to dismay.

“The boy was with us when we quitted the forest,” said Content, after a moment of death-like stillness. “I spoke to him in commendation of his activity, and of the knowledge he had shown in beating up the secret places of the deer; though there is little reason to think my words were understood.”

“And were it not sinful to take such solemn evidence in behalf of so light a matter, I could be qualified on the Book itself, that he was at my elbow as we entered the orchard,” added Reuben Ring, a man renowned in that little community for the accuracy of his vision.

“And I will make oath or declaration of any sort, lawful or conscientious, that he came not within the postern when it was opened by my own hand,” returned Eben Dudley. “I told off the number of the party as you passed, and right sure am I that no red-skin entered.”

“Canst thou tell us aught of the lad?” demanded Ruth, quick to take the alarm on a subject that had so long exercised her care, and given food to her imagination.

“Nothing. With me he hath not been seen since the turn of the day. I have not seen the face of living man from that moment, unless in truth one of mysterious character, whom I met in the forest, may be so called.”

The manner in which the woodsman spoke was too serious and too natural, not to give birth in his auditors to some of his own gravity. Perhaps the appearance of the Puritan, at that moment, aided in quieting the levity that had been uppermost in the minds of the young men; for it is certain that, when he entered, a deeper and a general curiosity came over the countenances of all present. Content waited a moment in respectful silence, till his father had moved slowly through the circle, and then he prepared himself to look further into an affair that began to assume the appearance of matter worthy of investigation.

CHAPTER IX.

“Last night of all,
When yon same star, that’s westward from the pole,
Had made its course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus, and myself,
The bell then beating one——”
“Peace, break thee off; look where it comes again.”
—*Hamlet.*

It is our duty as faithful historians of the events recorded in this homely legend, to conceal no circumstance which may throw the necessary degree of light on its incidents, nor any opinion that may serve for the better instruction of the reader in the characters of its actors. In order that this obligation may be discharged with sufficient clearness and precision, it has now become necessary to make a short digression from the immediate action of the tale.

Enough has been already shown, to prove that the Heathcotes lived at a time, and in a country, where very quaint and peculiar religious dogmas had the ascendancy. At a period when visible manifestations of the goodness of Providence, not only in spiritual but in temporal gifts, were confidently expected and openly proclaimed, it is not at all surprising that more evil agencies should be thought to exercise their power in a manner that is somewhat opposed to the experience of our own age. As we have no wish, however, to make these pages the vehicle of a theological or metaphysical controversy, we shall deal tenderly with certain important events, that most of the writers who were contemporary with the facts, assert took place in the colonies of New England, at and about the period of which we are now writing. It is sufficiently known that the art of witchcraft, and one even still more diabolical and direct in its origin, were then believed to flourish in that quarter of the world, to a degree that was probably in a very just proportion to the neglect with which most of the other arts of life were treated.

There is so much grave and respectable authority to prove the existence of these evil influences, that it requires a pen hardier than any we wield, to attack them without a suitable motive. “Flashy people,” says the learned and pious Cotton Mather, Doctor of Divinity and

Fellow of the Royal Society, "may burlesque these things; but when hundreds of the most sober people, in a country where they have as much mother wit, certainly, as the rest of mankind, *know them to be true*, nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of Sadducism can question them." Against this grave and credited authority, we pretend to raise no question of scepticism. We submit to the testimony of such a writer as conclusive, though as credulity is sometimes found to be bounded by geographical limits, and to possess something of a national character, it may be prudent to refer certain readers who dwell in the other hemisphere to the common law of England on this interesting subject, as it is ingeniously expounded by Keeble, and approved of by the twelve judges of that highly civilized and enlightened island. With this brief reference to so grave authorities in support of what we have now to offer, we shall return to the matter of the narrative, fully trusting that its incidents will throw some additional light on the subject of so deep and so general concern.

Content waited respectfully until his father had taken his seat, and then perceiving that the venerable Puritan had no immediate intention of moving personally in the affair, he commenced the examination of his dependent as follows; opening the matter with a seriousness that was abundantly warranted by the gravity of the subject itself.

"Thou hast spoken of one met in the forest," he said; "proceed with the purport of that interview, and tell us of what manner of man it was."

Thus directly interrogated, Eben Dudley disposed himself to give a full and satisfactory answer. First casting a glance around, so as to embrace every curious and eager countenance, and letting his look rest a little longer than common on a half-interested, half-incredulous, and somewhat ironical dark eye, that was riveted on his own from a distant corner of the room, he commenced his statement as follows:

"It is known to you all," said the borderer, "that when we had gained the mountain-top there was a division of our numbers, in such a fashion that each hunter should sweep his own range of the forest, in order that neither moose, deer, nor bear, might have reasonable chance of escape. Being of large frame, and it may be of swifter foot than common, the young captain saw fit to command Reuben Ring to flank one end of the line, and a man, who is nothing

short of him in either speed or strength, to do the same duty on the other. There was nothing particularly worthy of mention that took place on the flank I held for the first two hours ; unless indeed the fact, that three several times did I fall upon a maze of well-beaten deer-tracks, that as often led to nothing——”

“These are signs common to the woods, and they are no more than so many proofs that the animal has its sports, like any other playful creature, when not pressed by hunger or by danger,” quietly observed Content.

“I pretend not to take those deceitful tracks much into the account,” resumed Dudley ; “but shortly after losing the sound of the conchs, I roused a noble buck from his lair beneath a thicket of hemlocks, and having the game in view, the chase led me wide-off toward the wilderness, it may have been the distance of two leagues.”

“And in all that time had you no fitting moment to strike the beast ?”

“None whatever ; nor, if opportunity had been given, am I bold to say that hand of mine would have been hardy enough to aim at its life.”

“Was there aught in the deer that a hunter should seek to spare it ?”

“There was that in the deer, that might bring a Christian man to much serious reflection.”

“Deal more openly with the nature and appearance of the animal,” said Content, a little less tranquil than usual ; while the youths and maidens placed themselves in attitudes still more strongly denoting attention.

Dudley pondered an instant, and then he commenced a less equivocal enumeration of what he conceived to be the marvels of his tale.

“Firstly,” he said, “there was no trail, neither to nor from the spot where the creature had made its lair ; secondly, when roused, it took not the alarm, but leaped sportingly ahead, taking sufficient care to be beyond the range of musket, without ever becoming hid from the eye ; and lastly, its manner of disappearance was as worthy of mention as any other of its movements.”

“And in what manner didst thou lose the creature ?”

“I had gotten it upon the crest of a hillock, where true eye and steady hand might make sure of a buck of much smaller size, when—didst hear aught that might be accounted wonderful, at a season of the year when the snows are still lying on the earth ?”

The auditors regarded one another curiously, each endeavoring to recall some unwonted sound which might sustain a narrative that was fast obtaining the seducing interest of the marvellous.

"Wast sure, Charity, that the howl we heard from the forest was the yell of the beaten hound?" demanded a hand-maiden of Ruth, of a blue-eyed companion, who seemed equally well disposed to contribute her share of evidence in support of any exciting legend.

"It might have been other," was the answer; "though the hunters do speak of their having beaten the pup for restiveness."

"There was a tumult among the echoes that sounded like the noises which follow the uproar of a falling tree," said Ruth, thoughtfully. "I remember to have asked if it might not be that some fierce beast had caused a general discharge of the musketry, but my father was of opinion that death had undermined some heavy oak."

"At what hour might this have happened?"

"It was past the turn of the day; for it was at the moment I bethought me of the hunger of those who had toiled since light in the hills."

"That then was the sound I mean. It came not from falling tree, but was uttered in the air, far above all forests. Had it been heard by one better skilled in the secrets of nature——"

"He would say it thundered," interrupted Faith Ring, who, unlike most of the other listeners, manifested little of the quality which was expressed by her name. "Truly, Eben Dudley hath done marvels in this hunt; he hath come in with a thunderbolt in his head, instead of a fat buck on his shoulders!"

"Speak reverently, girl, of that thou dost not comprehend," said Mark Heathcote, with stern authority. "Marvels are manifested equally to the ignorant and to the learned; and although vain-minded pretenders to philosophy affirm that the warring of the elements is no more than nature working out its own purification, yet do we know, from all ancient authorities, that other manifestations are therein exhibited. Satan may have control over the magazines of the air; he can 'let off the ordnance of Heaven.' That 'the Prince of the Powers of Darkness' hath as good a share in chemistry as goes to the making of *aurum fulminans*, is asserted by one of the wisest writers of our age."

From this declaration, and more particularly from the learning discovered in the Puritan's speech, there was no one so hardy as to dissent. Faith was glad to shrink back among the bevy of awe-struck maidens, while Content, after a sufficiently respectful pause, invited the woodsman, who was yet teeming with the most important part of his communication, to proceed.

"While my eye was searching for the lightning which should in reason have attended that thunder, had it been uttered in the manner of nature, the buck had vanished ; and when I rushed upon the hillock, in order to keep the game in view, a man mounting its opposite side came so suddenly upon me, that our muskets were at each other's breasts before either had time for speech."

"What manner of man was he ?"

"So far as human judgment might determine, he seemed a traveller, who was endeavoring to push through the wilderness, from the towns below to the distant settlements of the Bay Province ; but I account it exceedingly wonderful that the trail of a leaping buck should have brought us together in so unwonted a manner !"

"And didst thou see aught of the deer, after that encounter ?"

"In the first hurry of the surprise, it did certainly appear as if an animal were bounding along the wood into a distant thicket ; but it is known how readily one may be led by seeming probabilities into a false conclusion, and so I account that glimpse a delusion. No doubt the animal having done that which it was commissioned to perform, did then and there disappear, in the manner I have named."

"It might have been thus. And the stranger—had you discourse with him before parting ?"

"We tarried together a short hour. He related much marvellous matter of the experiences of the people near the sea. According to the testimony of the stranger, the Powers of Darkness have been manifested in the provinces in a hideous fashion. Numberless of the believers have been persecuted by the invisibles, and greatly have they endured suffering, both in soul and body."

"Of all this have I witnessed surprising instances in my day," said Mark Heathcote, breaking the awful stillness that succeeded the annunciation of so heavy a visitation on the peace of the colony, with his deep-toned and imposing voice. "Did he with whom you conferred, enter into the particulars of the trials ?"

"He spoke also of certain other signs that are thought to foretell the coming of trouble. When I named the weary chase that I had made, and the sound which came from the air, he said that these would be accounted trifles in the towns of the Bay, where the thunder and its lightnings had done much evil work the past season, Satan having especially shown his spite by causing them to do injury to the houses of the Lord."

"There has long been reason to think that the pilgrimage of the righteous into these wilds, will be visited by some fierce opposition of those envious natures, which, fostering evil themselves, cannot brook to look upon the toiling of such as strive to keep the narrow path. We will now resort to the only weapon it is permitted us to wield in this controversy, but which, when handled with diligence and zeal, never fails to lead to victory."

So saying, without waiting to hear more of the tale of Eben Dudley, old Mark Heathcote arose, and assuming the upright attitude usual among the people of his sect, he addressed himself to prayer. The grave and awe-struck but deeply confiding congregation imitated his example, and the lips of the Puritan had parted in the act of utterance, when a low, faltering note, like that produced by a wind instrument, rose on the outer air, and penetrated to the place where the family was assembled. A conch was suspended at the postern, in readiness to be used by any of the family whom accident or occupation should detain beyond the usual hour of closing the gates; and both by the direction and nature of this interruption, it would seem that an applicant for admission stood at the portal. The effect on the auditors was general and instantaneous. Notwithstanding the recent dialogue, the young men involuntarily sought their arms, while the startled females huddled together like a flock of trembling and timid deer.

"There is, of a certainty, a signal from without!" Content at length observed, after waiting to suffer the sounds to die away among the angles of the buildings. "Some hunter who hath strayed from his path, claimeth hospitality."

Eben Dudley shook his head like one who dissented; but, having with all the other youths grasped his musket, he stood as undetermined as the rest concerning the course it was proper to pursue. It is uncertain how long this indecision might have continued, had no further summons been given; but he without appeared too impatient of de-

lay to suffer much time to be lost. The conch sounded again, and with far better success than before. The blast was longer, louder, and bolder, than that which had first pierced the walls of the dwelling, rising full and rich on the air, as though one well practised in the use of the instrument had placed lips to the shell.

Content would scarcely have presumed to disobey a mandate coming from his father, had it been little in conformity with his own intentions. But second thoughts had already shown him the necessity of decision, and he was in the act of motioning to Dudley and Reuben Ring to follow, when the Puritan bade him look to the matter. Making a sign for the rest of the family to remain where they were, and arming himself with a musket which had more than once that day been proved to be of certain aim, he led the way to the postern which has already been so often mentioned.

"Who sounds at my gate?" demanded Content, when he and his followers had gained a position, under cover of a low earthen mound erected expressly for the purpose of commanding the entrance; "who summons a peaceful family, at this hour of the night, to their outer defences?"

"One who hath need of what he asketh, or he would not disturb thy quiet," was the answer. "Open the postern, Master Heathcote, without fear; it is a brother in the faith, and a subject of the same laws, that asketh the boon."

"Here is truly a Christian man without," said Content, hurrying to the postern, which, without a moment's delay, he threw freely open, saying as he did so, "enter of Heaven's mercy, and be welcome to that we have to bestow."

A tall, and, by his tread, a heavy man, wrapped in a riding cloak, bowed to the greeting, and immediately passed beneath the low lintel. Every eye was keenly fastened on the stranger, who, after ascending the acclivity a short distance, paused, while the young men, under their master's orders, carefully and scrupulously renewed the fastenings of the gate. When bolts and bars had done their office, Content joined his guest; and after making another fruitless effort, by the feeble light which fell from the stars, to scan his person, he said, in his own meek and quiet manner—

"Thou must have great need of warmth and nourishment. The distance from this valley to the nearest habita-

tion is wearisome, and one who hath journeyed it, in a season like this, may well be nigh fainting. Follow, and deal with that we have to bestow as freely as if it were thine own."

Although the stranger manifested none of that impatience which the heir of the Wish-Ton-Wish appeared to think one so situated might in all reason feel, thus invited he did not hesitate to comply. As he followed in the footsteps of his host, his tread, however, was leisurely and dignified; and, once or twice, when the other half delayed in order to make some passing observation of courtesy, he betrayed no indiscreet anxiety to enter on those personal indulgences which might in reality prove so grateful to one who had journeyed far in an inclement season, and along a road where neither dwelling nor security invited repose.

"Here is warmth and a peaceful welcome," pursued Content, ushering his guest into the centre of a group of fearfully anxious faces. "In a little time, other matters shall be added to thy comfort."

When the stranger found himself under the glare of a powerful light, and confronted to so many curious and wondering eyes, for a single instant he hesitated. Then stepping calmly forward, he cast the short riding-cloak, which had closely muffled his features, from his shoulders, and discovered the severe eye, the stern lineaments, and the athletic form of him who had once before been known to enter the doors of Wish-Ton-Wish with little warning, and to have quitted them so mysteriously.

The Puritan had arisen, with quiet and grave courtesy, to receive his visitor; but obvious, powerful, and extraordinary interest gleamed about his usually subdued visage, when, as the features of the other were exposed to view, he recognized the person of the man who advanced to meet him.

"Mark Heathcote," said the stranger, "my visit is to thee. It may, or it may not, prove longer than the last, as thou shalt receive my tidings. Affairs of the last moment demand that there should be little delay in hearing that which I have to offer."

Notwithstanding the excess and nature of the surprise which the veteran Mark had certainly betrayed, it endured just long enough to allow those wondering eyes, which were eagerly devouring all that passed, to note its existence. Then, the subdued and characteristic manner which

in general marked his air, instantly returned, and with a quiet gesture, like that which friends use in moments of confidence and security, he beckoned to the other to follow to an inner room. The stranger complied, making a slight bow of recognition to Ruth, as he passed her on the way to the apartment chosen for an interview that was evidently intended to be private.

CHAPTER X.

Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

Hor. Do, if it will not stand.

Mar. 'Tis here!

Hor. 'Tis here!

Mar. 'Tis gone!—*Hamlet.*

THE time that this unexpected visitor stood uncloaked and exposed to recognition, before the eyes of the curious group in the outer room, did not much exceed a minute. Still it was long enough to allow men who rarely overlooked the smallest peculiarity of dress or air, to note some of the more distinguishing accompaniments of his attire. The heavy horseman's pistols, once before exhibited, were in his girdle, and young Mark got a glimpse of a silver-handled dagger which had pleased his eye before that night. But the passage of his grandfather and the stranger from the room prevented the boy from determining whether it was entirely of the same fashion as that, which, rather as a memorial of by-gone scenes than for any service that it might now be expected to perform, hung above the bed of the former.

"The man hath not yet parted with his arms!" exclaimed the quick-sighted youth, when he found that every other tongue continued silent. "I would he may now leave them with my grand'ther, that I may chase the skulking Wampanoag to his hiding——"

"Hot-headed boy! Thy tongue is too much given to levity," said Ruth, who had not only resumed her seat, but also the light employment that had been interrupted by the blast at the gate, with a calmness of mien that did not fail in some degree to reassure her maidens. "Instead of cherishing the lessons of peace that are taught thee, thy unruly thoughts are ever bent on strife."

"Is there harm in wishing to be armed with a weapon suited to my years, that I may do service in beating down the power of our enemies; and perhaps aid something, too, in affording security to my mother?"

"Thy mother hath no fears," returned the matron, gravely, while grateful affection prompted a kind but furtive glance toward the high-spirited though sometimes froward lad. "Reason hath already taught me the folly of alarm, because one has knocked at our gate in the night-season. Lay aside thy arms, men; you see that my husband no longer clings to the musket. Be certain that his eye will give us warning when there shall be danger at hand."

The unconcern of her husband was even more strikingly true than the simple language of his wife would appear to convey. Content had not only laid aside his weapon, but he had resumed his seat near the fire, with an air as calm, as assured, and it might have seemed to one watchfully observant, as understanding, as her own. Until now, the stout Dudley had remained leaning on his piece, immovable and apparently unconscious as a statue. But, following the injunctions of one he was accustomed to obey, he placed the musket against the wall, with the care of a hunter, and then running a hand through his shaggy locks, as though the action might quicken ideas that were never remarkably active, he bluntly exclaimed—

"An armed hand is well in these forests, but an armed heel is not less wanting to him who would push a roadster from the Connecticut to the Wish-Ton-Wish, between a rising and a setting sun! The stranger no longer journeys in the saddle, as is plain by the sign that his boot beareth no spur. When he worried, by dint of hard pricking, the miserable hack that proved food for the wolves, through the forest, he had better appointments. I saw the bones of the animal no later than this day. They have been polished by fowls and frost, till the driven snow of the mountains is not whiter!"

Meaning and uneasy, but hasty glances of the eye were exchanged between Content and Ruth, as Eben Dudley thus uttered the thoughts which had been suggested by the unexpected return of the stranger.

"Go you to the look-out at the western palisadoes," said the latter; "and see if perchance the Indian may not be lurking near the dwellings, ashamed of his delay, and perchance fearful of calling us to his admission. I cannot

think that the child means to desert us, with no sign of kindness, and without leave-taking."

"I will not take upon me to say, how much or how little of ceremony the youngster may fancy to be due to the master of the valley and his kin; but if not gone already, the snow will not melt more quietly in the thaw, than the lad will one day disappear. Reuben Ring, thou hast an eye for light or darkness; come forth with me, that no sign escape us. Should thy sister, Faith, make one of our party, it would not be easy for the red-skin to pass the clearing without a hail."

"Go to," hurriedly answered the female; "it is more womanly that I tarry to see to the wants of him who hath journeyed far and hard, since the rising of the sun. If the boy pass thy vigilance, wakeful Dudley, he will have little cause to fear that of others."

Though Faith so decidedly declined to make one of the party, her brother complied without reluctance. The young men were about to quit the place together, when the latch, on which the hand of Dudley was already laid, rose quietly without aid from his finger, the door opened, and the object of their intended search glided past them, and took his customary position in one of the more retired corners of the room. There was so much of the ordinary noiseless manner of the young captive in this entrance, that for a moment they who witnessed the passage of his dark form across the apartment, were led to think the movement no more than the visit he was always permitted to make at that hour. But recollection soon came, and with it not only the suspicious circumstance of his disappearance, but the inexplicable manner of his admission within the gates.

"The pickets must be looked to!" exclaimed Dudley, the instant a second look assured him that his eyes in truth beheld him who had been missing. "The place that a stripling can scale might well admit a host."

"Truly," said Content, "this needeth explanation. Hath not the boy entered when the gate was opened for the stranger? Here cometh one that may speak to the fact!"

"It is so," said the individual named, who re-entered from the inner room in season to hear the nature of the remark. "I found this native child near thy gate, and took upon me the office of a Christian man to bid him welcome. Certain am I, that one, kind of heart and gently

disposed, like the mistress of this family, will not turn him away in anger."

"He is no stranger at our fire, or at our board," said Ruth; "had it been otherwise thou wouldst have done well."

Eben Dudley looked incredulous. His mind had been powerfully exercised that day with visions of the marvellous, and of a certainty, there was some reason to distrust the manner in which the re-appearance of the youth had been made.

"It will be well to look to the fastenings," he muttered, "lest others, less easy to dispose of, should follow. Now that invisible agencies are at work in the Colony one may not sleep too soundly!"

"Then go thou to the look-out, and keep the watch, till the clock shall strike the hour of midnight," said the Puritan, who uttered the command in a manner to show that he was in truth moved by considerations far deeper than the vague apprehensions of his dependent. "Ere sleep overcome thee another shall be ready for the relief."

Mark Heathcote seldom spoke, but respectful silence permitted the lowest of his syllables to be audible. On the present occasion, when his voice was first heard, such a stillness came over all in presence, that he finished the sentence amid the nearly imperceptible breathings of the listeners. In this momentary but death-like quiet, there arose a blast from the conch at the gate, that might have seemed an echo of that which had so lately startled the already-excited inmates of the dwelling. At the repetition of sounds so unwonted all sprang to their feet, but no one spoke. Content cast a hurried and inquiring glance at his father, who in his turn had anxiously sought the eye of the stranger. The latter stood firm and unmoved. One hand was clenched upon the back of the chair from which he had arisen, and the other grasped, perhaps unconsciously, the handle of one of those weapons which had attracted the attention of young Mark, and which still continued thrust through the broad leathern belt that girded his doublet.

"The sound is like that which one little used to deal with earthly instruments might raise!" muttered one of those whose minds had been prepared, by the narrative of Dudley, to believe in anything marvellous.

"Come from what quarter it may, it is a summons that

must be answered," returned Content. "Dudley, thy musket ; this visit is so unwonted, that more than one hand should do the office of porter."

The borderer instantly complied, muttering between his teeth as he shook the priming deeper into the barrel of his piece, "Your over-sea gallants are quick on the trail to-night !" Then throwing the musket into the hollow of his arm, he cast a look of discontent and resentment toward Faith Ring, and was about to open the door for the passage of Content, when another blast arose on the silence without. The second touch of the shell was firmer, longer, louder, and more true, than that by which it had just been preceded.

"One might fancy the conch was speaking in mockery," observed Content, looking with meaning towards their guest. "Never did sound more resemble sound than these we have just heard, and those thou drew from the shell when asking admission."

A sudden light appeared to break in upon the intelligence of the stranger. Advancing more into the circle, rather with the freedom of long familiarity than with the diffidence of a newly-arrived guest, he motioned for silence as he said—

"Let none move, but this stout woodsman, the young captain, and myself. We will go forth, and doubt not that the safety of those within shall be regarded."

Notwithstanding the singularity of this proposal, as it appeared to excite neither surprise nor opposition in the Puritan or his son, the rest of the family offered no objection. The stranger had no sooner spoken, than he advanced near to the torch, and looked closely into the condition of his pistols. Then turning to old Mark, he continued in an undertone—

"Peradventure there will be more worldly strife than any which can flow from the agencies that stir up the unquiet spirits of the colonies. In such an extremity, it may be well to observe a soldier's caution."

"I like not this mockery of sound," returned the Puritan ; "it argueth a taunting and fiend-like temper. We have, of late, had in this colony tragical instances of what the disappointed malice of Azazel can attempt ; and it would be vain to hope that the evil agencies are not vexed with the sight of my Bethel."

Though the stranger listened to the words of his host with respect, it was plain that his thoughts dwelt on dan-

gers of a different character. The member that still rested on the handle of his weapon, was clenched with greater firmness ; and a grim, though a melancholy expression was seated about a mouth, that was compressed in a manner to denote the physical, rather than the spiritual resolution of the man. He made a sign to the two companions he had chosen, and led the way to the court.

By this time, the shades of night had materially thickened, and, although the hour was still early, a darkness had come over the valley that rendered it difficult to distinguish objects at any distance from the eye. The obscurity made it necessary that they who now issued from the door of the dwelling, should advance with caution, lest, ere properly admonished of its presence, their persons should be exposed to some lurking danger. When the three, however, were safely established behind the thick curtain of plank and earth that covered and commanded the entrance, and where their persons, from the shoulders downward, were completely protected alike from shot and arrow, Content demanded to know, who applied at his gates for admission at an hour when they were habitually closed for the night. Instead of receiving, as before, a ready answer, the silence was so profound, that his own words were very distinctly heard repeated, as was not uncommon at that quiet hour, among the recesses of the neighboring woods.

"Come it from Devil, or come it from man, here is treachery!" whispered the stranger after a fitting pause. "Artifice must be met by artifice ; but thou art much abler to advise against the wiles of the forest, than one trained, as I have been, in the less cunning deceptions of Christian warfare."

"What think'st, Dudley?" asked Content—"Will it be well to sally, or shall we wait another signal from the conch?"

"Much dependeth on the quality of the guests expected," returned he of whom counsel was asked. "As for the braggart gallants, that are over-valiant among the maidens, and heavy of heart when they think the screech of the jay an Indian whoop, I care not if ye beat the pickets to the earth, and call upon them to enter on the gallop. I know the manner to send them to the upper story of the block, quicker than the cluck of the turkey can muster its young ; but——"

"'Tis well to be discreet in language, in a moment of

such serious uncertainty!" interrupted the stranger. "We look for no gallants of the kind."

"Then will I give you a conceit that shall know the reason of the music of yon conch. Go ye two back into the house, making much conversation by the way, in order that any without may hear. When ye have entered, it shall be my task to find such a post nigh the gate, that none shall knock again, and no porter be at hand to question them in the matter of their errand."

"This soundeth better," said Content; "and that it may be done with all safety, some others of the young men, who are accustomed to this species of artifice, shall issue by the secret door and lie in wait behind the dwellings, in order that support shall not be wanting in case of violence. Whatever else thou dost, Dudley, remember that thou dost not undo the fastenings of the postern."

"Look to the support," returned the woodsman; "should it be keen-eyed Reuben Ring, I shall feel none the less certain that good aid is at my back. The whole of that family are quick of wit and ready of invention, unless it may be the wight who hath got the form without the reason of a man."

"Thou shalt have Reuben, and none other of his kin," said Content. "Be well advised of the fastenings, and so I wish thee all fitting success, in a deception that cannot be sinful, since it aims only at our safety."

With this injunction, Content and the stranger left Dudley to the practice of his own devices, the former observing the precaution to speak aloud while returning, in order that any listeners without might be led to suppose the whole party had retired from the search, satisfied of its fruitlessness.

In the meantime, the youth left nigh the postern set about the accomplishment of the task he had undertaken, in sober earnest. Instead of descending in a direct line to the palisadoes, he also ascended, and made a circuit among the out-buildings on the margin of the acclivity. Then bending so low as to blend his form with objects on the snow, he gained an angle of the palisadoes, at a point remote from the spot he intended to watch, and, as he hoped, aided by the darkness of the hour and the shadows of the hill, completely protected from observation. When beneath the palisadoes, the sentinel crouched to the earth, creeping with extreme caution along the timber which bound their lower ends, until he found himself arrived at

a species of sentry-box, that was erected for the very purpose to which he now intended it should be applied. Once within the cover of this little recess, the sturdy woodsman bestowed his large frame with as much attention to comfort and security as the circumstances would permit. Here he prepared to pass many weary minutes, before there should be further need of his services.

The reader will find no difficulty in believing that one of opinions like those of the borderer, did not enter on his silent watch without much distrust of the character of the guests that he might be called upon to receive. Enough has been shown to prove that the suspicion uppermost in his mind was, that the unwelcome agents of the government had returned on the heels of the stranger. But, notwithstanding the seeming probability of this opinion, there were secret misgivings of the earthly origin of the two last windings of the shell. All the legends, and all the most credited evidence in cases of prestigious agency, as it had been exhibited in the colonies of New England, went to show the malignant pleasure the Evil Spirits found, in indulging their wicked mockeries, or in otherwise tormenting those who placed their support on a faith that was believed to be so repugnant to their own ungrateful and abandoned natures. Under the impressions naturally excited by the communication he had held with the traveller in the mountains, Eben Dudley found his mind equally divided between the expectation of seeing, at each moment, one of the men whom he had induced to quit the valley so unceremoniously, returning to obtain surreptitiously admission within the gate, or of being made an unwilling witness of some wicked manifestation of that power which was temporarily committed to the invisibles. In both of these expectations, however, he was fated to be disappointed. Notwithstanding the strong spiritual bias of the opinions of the credulous sentinel, there was too much of the dross of temporal things in his composition to elevate him altogether above the weakness of humanity. A mind so encumbered began to weary with its own contemplations ; and, as it grew feeble with its extraordinary efforts, the dominion of matter gradually resumed its sway. Thought, instead of being clear and active, as the emergency would have seemed to require, began to grow misty. Once or twice the borderer half arose, and appeared to look about him with observation ; and then as his large frame fell heavily back into its former semi-re-

cumbent attitude, he grew tranquil and stationary. This movement was several times repeated, at intervals of increasing length, till, at the end of an hour, forgetting alike the hunt, the troopers, and the mysterious agents of evil, the young man yielded to the fatigue of the day. The tall oaks of the adjoining forest stood not more immovable in the quiet of the tranquil hour, than his frame now leaned against the side of its narrow habitation.

How much time was thus lost in inactivity, Eben Dudley could never precisely tell. He always stoutly maintained it could not have been long, since his watch was not disturbed by the smallest of those sounds from the woods, which sometimes occur in deep night, and which may be termed the breathing of the forest in its slumbers. His first distinct recollection, was that of feeling a hand grasped with the power of a giant. Springing to his feet, the young man eagerly stretched forth an arm, saying as he did so, in words sufficiently confused—

“If the buck hath fallen by a shot in the head, I grant him to be thine, Reuben Ring; but if struck in limb or body, I claim the venison for a surer hand.”

“Truly, a very just division of the spoil,” returned one in an undertone, and speaking as if sounds too loud might be dangerous. “Thou givest the head of the deer for a target to Reuben Ring, and keepest the rest of the creature to thine own uses.”

“Who hath sent thee, at this hour, to the postern? Dost not know that there are thought to be strangers outlying in the fields?”

“I know that there are some, who are not strangers, inlying on their watch!” said Faith Ring. “What shame would come upon thee, Dudley, did the captain, and they who have been so strongly exercised in prayer within, but suspect how little care thou hast had of their safety, the while!”

“Have they come to harm! If the captain hath held them to spiritual movements, I hope that he will allow that nothing earthly hath passed this postern to disturb the exercise. As I hope to be dealt honestly by, in all matters of character, I have not once quitted the gate since the watch was set.”

“Else would'st thou be the famousest sleep-walker in the Connecticut Colony! Why, drowsy one, conch cannot raise a louder blast than that thou soundest, when eyes are fairly shut in sleep. This may be watching, according to thy

meaning of the word ; but infant in its cradle is not half so ignorant of that which passeth around it, as thou hast been."

"I think, Faith Ring, that thou hast gotten to be much given to backbiting, and evil saying against friends, since the visit of the gallants from over sea."

"Out upon gallants from over sea, and thee too, man ! I am not a girl to be flouted with bold speech from one who doth not know whether he be sleeping or waking. I tell thee, thy good name would be lost in the family, did it come to the ears of the captain, and more particularly to the knowledge of that soldier stranger, up in the dwelling, of whom even the madam maketh so great ceremony, that thou hast been watching with a tuneful nose, an open mouth, and a sealed eye."

"If any but thee had'st said this slander of me, girl, it would go nigh to raise hot speech between us ! Thy brother, Reuben Ring, knows better than to stir my temper by such falsity of accusation."

"Thou dealest so generously by him, that he is prone to forget thy misdeeds. Truly he hath the head of the buck, while thou contentest thyself with the offals and all the less worthy parts ! Go to, Dudley ; thou wast in a heavy dream when I caused thee to awake."

"A pretty time have we fallen upon, when petticoats are used instead of beards and strong-armed men, to go the rounds of the sentinels, and to say who sleepeth and who is watchful ! What hath brought thee so far from the exercises and so nigh the gates, Mistress Faith, now that there is no over-sea gallant to soothe thy ears with lying speech and light declarations."

"If speech not to be credited is that I seek," returned the girl, "truly the errand hath not been without its reward. What brought me hither, sooth ! Why, the madam hath need of articles from the outer buttery—and—aye—and my ears led me to the postern. Thou knowest, musical Dudley, that I have had occasion to hearken to thy watchful notes before this night. But my time is too useful to be wasted in idleness ; thou art now awake, and may thank her who hath done thee a good turn with no wish to boast of it, that one of a black beard is not the laughing-stock of all the youths in the family. If thou keepest thine own counsel, the captain may yet praise thee for a vigilant sentinel ; though Heaven forgive him the wrong he will do the truth !"

"Perhaps a little anger at unjust suspicions may have

prompted more than the matter needed, Faith, when I taxed thee with the love of backbiting, and I do now recall that word ; though I will ever deny that aught more than some wandering recollection concerning the hunt of this day hath come over my thoughts, and perhaps made me even forgetful that it was needful to be silent at the postern ; and, therefore, on the truth of a Christian man, I do forgive thee, the——”

But Faith was already out of sight and out of hearing. Dudley himself, who began to have certain prickings of conscience concerning the ingratitude he had manifested to one who had taken so much interest in his reputation, now bethought him seriously of that which remained to be done. He had much reason to suspect that there was less of the night before him than he had at first believed, and he became in consequence more sensible of the necessity of making some report of the events of his watch. Accordingly, he cast a scrutinizing glance around in order to make sure that the facts should not contradict his testimony, and then, first examining the fastenings of the postern, he mounted the hill and presented himself before the family. The members of the latter, having in truth passed most of the long interval of his absence in spiritual exercises and in religious conversation, were not so sensible of his delay in reporting, as they might otherwise have been.

“What tidings dost thou bring us from without ?” said Content, so soon as the self-relieved sentinel appeared. “Hast seen any, or hast heard that which is suspicious ?”

Ere Dudley would answer, his eye did not fail to study the half-malicious expression of the countenance of her who was busy in some domestic toil, directly opposite to the place where he stood. But reading there no more than a glance of playful though smothered irony, he was encouraged to proceed in his report.

“The watch has been quiet,” was the answer ; “and there is little cause to keep the sleepers longer from their beds. Some vigilant eyes, like those of Reuben Ring and my own, had better be open until the morning ; further than that, there is no reason to be wakeful.”

Perhaps the borderer would have dwelt more at large on his own readiness to pass the remainder of the hours of rest in attending to the security of those who slept, had not another wicked glance from the dark, laughing eye of her who stood so favorably placed to observe his counte-

nance, admonished him of the prudence of being modest in his professions.

"This alarm hath then happily passed away," said the Puritan, rising. "We will now go to our pillows in thankfulness and peace. Thy service shall not be forgotten, Dudley; for thou hast exposed thyself to seeming danger, at least, in our behalf."

"That hath he!" half-whispered Faith; "and sure am I that we maidens will not forget his readiness to lose the sweets of sleep in order that the feeble may not come to harm."

"Speak not of the trifle," hurriedly returned the other. "There has been some deception in the sound, for it is now my opinion, except to summon us to the gate, that this stranger might enter—the conch has not been touched at all to-night."

"Then is it a deception which is repeated!" exclaimed Content, rising from his chair as a faint and broken blast from the shell, like that which had first announced their visitor, again struggled among the buildings, until it reached every ear in the dwelling.

"Here is warning as mysterious as it may prove portentous!" said old Mark Heathcote, when the surprise, not to say the consternation of the moment, had subsided. "Hast seen nothing that might justify this?"

Eben Dudley, like most of the auditors, was too much confounded to reply. All seemed to attend anxiously for the second and more powerful blast, which was to complete the imitation of the stranger's summons. It was not necessary to wait long; for in a time as near as might be to that which had intervened between the two first peals of the horn, followed another, and in a note so true again, as to give it the semblance of an echo.

CHAPTER XI.

"I will watch to-night;
Perchance 'twill walk again."—*Hamlet.*

"MAY not this be a warning given in mercy?" the Puritan, at all times disposed to yield credit to supernatural manifestations of the care of Providence, demanded with

a solemnity that did not fail to produce its impression on most of his auditors. "The history of our colonies is full of the evidences of these merciful interpositions."

"We will thus consider it," returned the stranger, to whom the question seemed more particularly addressed. "The first measure shall be to seek out the danger to which it points. Let the youth they call Dudley, give me the aid of his powerful frame and manly courage, then trust the discovery of the meaning of these frequent speakings of the conch to me."

"Surely, Submission, thou wilt not again be first to go forth!" exclaimed Mark, in a surprise that was equally manifested by Content and Ruth, the latter of whom pressed her little image to her side as though the bare proposal presented a powerful picture of supernatural danger. "'Twill be well to think maturely on the step, ere thou runnest the hazard of such an adventure."

"Better it should be I," said Content, "who am accustomed to forest signs, and all the usual testimonials of the presence of those who may wish us harm."

"No," said he, who for the first time had been called "Submission," a name that savored of the religious enthusiasm of the times, and which might have been adopted as an open avowal of his readiness to bow beneath some peculiar dispensation of Providence. "This service shall be mine. Thou art both husband and father; and many are there who look to thy safety as to their rock of earthly support and comfort, while neither kindred, nor—but we will not speak of things foreign to our purpose! Thou knowest, Mark Heathcote, that peril and I are no strangers. There is little need to bid me be prudent. Come, bold woodsman; shoulder thy musket, and be ready to do credit to thy manhood should there be reason to prove it."

"And why not Reuben Ring?" said a hurried female voice, that all knew to proceed from the lips of the sister of the youth just named. "He is quick of eye and ready of hand in trials like these; would it not be well to succor thy party with such aid?"

"Peace, girl," meekly observed Ruth. "This matter is already in the ordering of one used to command; there needeth no counsel from thy short experience."

Faith shrank back, abashed; the flush which had mantled over her brown cheek deepening to a tint like that of blood.

Submission (we use the appellation in the absence of all

others) fastened a searching glance for a single moment on the countenance of the girl; and then, as if his intention had not been diverted from the principal subject in hand, he rejoined coolly—

“We go as scouts and observers of that which may hereafter call for the ready assistance of this youth; but numbers would expose us to observation, without adding to our usefulness—and yet,” he added, arresting his foot-step, which was already turned toward the door, and looking earnestly and long at the Indian boy, “perhaps there standeth one who might much enlighten us, would he but speak!”

This remark drew every eye on the person of the captive. The lad stood the scrutiny with the undismayed and immovable composure of his race. But though his eye met the looks of those around him haughtily and in pride, it was not gleaming with any of that stern defiance which had so often been known to glitter in his glances, when he had reason to think that his fortunes or his person was the subject of the peculiar observation of those with whom he dwelt. On the contrary, the expression of his dark visage was rather that of amity than of hatred, and there was a moment when the look he cast upon Ruth and her offspring was visibly touched with a feeling of concern. A glance, charged with such a meaning, could not escape the quick-sighted vigilance of a mother.

“The child hath proved himself worthy to be trusted,” she said; “and in the name of Him who looketh into and knoweth all hearts, let him once more go forth.”

Her lips became sealed, for again the conch announced the seeming impatience of those without to be admitted. The full tones of the shell thrilled on the nerves of the listeners, as though they proclaimed the coming of some great and fearful judgment.

In the midst of these often-repeated and mysterious sounds, Submission alone seemed calm and unmoved. Turning his look from the countenance of the boy, whose head had dropped upon his breast as the last notes of the conch rang among the buildings, he motioned hurriedly to Dudley to follow, and left the place.

There was, in good truth, that in the secluded situation of the valley, the darkness of the hour, and the nature of the several interruptions, which might readily awaken deep concern in the breasts of men as firm even as those who now issued into the open air, in quest of the solution of

doubts that were becoming intensely painful. The stranger, or Submission, as we may in future have frequent occasion to call him, led the way in silence to a point of the eminence, without the buildings, where the eye might overlook the palisadoes that hedged the sides of the acclivity, and command a view beyond of all that the dusky and imperfect light would reveal.

It was a scene that required familiarity with a border life to be looked on at any moment with indifference. The broad, nearly interminable, and seemingly trackless forest lay about them, bounding the view to the narrow limits of the valley, as though it were some straitened oasis amidst an ocean of wilderness. Within the boundaries of the cleared land objects were less indistinct, though even those nearest and most known were now seen only in the confused and gloomy outlines of night.

Across this dim prospect Submission and his companion gazed long and cautiously.

"There is naught but motionless stumps and fences loaded with snow," said the former, when his eye had roamed over the whole circuit of the view which lay on the side of the valley where they stood. "We must go forth, that we may look nearer to the fields."

"This way, then, is the postern," said Dudley, observing that the other took a direction opposite to that which led to the gate. But a gesture of authority induced him at the next instant to restrain his voice, and to follow whither his companion chose to lead the way.

The stranger made a circuit of half the hill ere he descended to the palisadoes, at a point where lay long and massive piles of wood, which had been collected for the fuel of the family. This spot was one that overlooked the steepest acclivity of the eminence, which was in itself, just there, so difficult of ascent, as to render the provision of the pickets far less necessary than in its more even faces. Still no useful precaution for the security of the family had been neglected, even at this strong point of the works. The piles of wood were laid at such a distance from the pickets as to afford no facilities for scaling them, while, on the other hand, they formed platforms and breast-works that might have greatly added to the safety of those who should be required to defend this portion of the fortress. Taking his way directly amid the parallel piles, the stranger descended rapidly through the whole of their mazes, until he had reached the open space between the outer of the

rows and the palisadoes, a space that was warily left too wide to be passed by the leap of man.

"'Tis many a day since foot of mine has been in this spot," said Eben Dudley, feeling his way along a path that his companion threaded without any apparent hesitation. "My own hand laid this outer pile some winters since, and certain am I, that from that hour to this, man hath not touched a billet of the wood. And yet, for one who hath come from over sea, it would appear that thou hast no great difficulty in making way among the narrow lanes!"

"He that hath sight may well choose between air and beechen logs," returned the other, stopping at the palisadoes, and in a place that was concealed from any prying eyes within the works, by triple and quadruple barriers of wood. Feeling in his girdle, he then drew forth something which Dudley was not long in discovering to be a key. While the latter, aided by the little light that fell from the heavens, was endeavoring to make the most of his eyes, Submission applied the instrument to a lock that was artfully sunk in one of the timbers, at the height of a man's breast from the ground, and giving a couple of vigorous turns, a piece of the palisado, some half a fathom long, yielded on a powerful hinge below, and falling, made an opening sufficiently large for the passage of a human body.

"Here is a sally-port ready provided for our sortie," the stranger coolly observed, motioning to the other to precede him. When Dudley had passed, his companion followed, and the opening was then carefully closed and locked.

"Now is all fast again, and we are in the fields without raising alarm to any of mortal birth, at least," continued the guide, thrusting a hand into the folds of his doublet, as if to feel for a weapon, and preparing to descend the difficult declivity which still lay between him and the base of the hill. Eben Dudley hesitated to follow. The interview with the traveller in the mountains occurred to his heated imagination, and the visions of a prestigious agency revived with all their original force. The whole manner and the mysterious character of his companion was little likely to re-assure a mind disturbed with such images.

"There is a rumor going in the Colony," muttered the borderer, "that the invisibles are permitted for a time to work their evil; and it may well happen that some of their ungodly members shall journey to the Wish-Ton-Wish, in lack of better employment."

"Thou sayest truly," replied the stranger; "but the

power that allows of their wicked torments may have seen fit to provide an agent of his own to defeat their subtleties. We will now draw near to the gate, in order that an eye may be kept on their malicious designs."

Submission spoke with gravity, and not without a certain manner of solemnity. Dudley yielded, though with a divided and a disturbed mind, to his suggestion. Still he followed in the footsteps of the stranger, with a caution that might well have eluded the vigilance of any agency short of that which drew its means of information from sources deeper than any of human power.

When the two watchers had found a secret and suitable place, not far from the postern, they disposed themselves in silence to await the result. The out-buildings lay in deep quiet, not a sound of any sort arising from all of the many tenants they were known to contain. The lines of ragged fences; the blackened stumps, capped with little pyramids of snow; the taller and sometimes suspicious-looking stubs; an insulated tree, and finally the broad border of forest—were alike motionless, gloomy, and clothed in the doubtful forms of night. Still, the space around the well-secured and trebly-barred postern was vacant. A sheet of spotless snow served as a background, that would have been sure to betray the presence of any object passing over its surface. Even the conch might be seen suspended from one of the timbers, as mute and inoffensive as the hour when it had been washed by the waves on the sands of the seashore.

"Here will we watch for the coming of the stranger, be he commissioned by the powers of air, or be he one sent on an errand of earth," whispered Submission, preparing his arms for immediate use, and disposing of his person, at the same time, in a manner most convenient to endure the weariness of a patient watch.

"I would my mind were at ease on the question of right-doing in dealing harm to one who disturbs the quiet of a border family," said Dudley, in a tone sufficiently repressed for caution; "it may be found prudent to strike the first blow, should one like an over-sea gallant, after all, be inclined to trouble us at this hour."

"In that strait, thou wilt do well to give little heed to the order of the offences," gloomily returned the other. "Should another messenger of England appear——"

He paused, for a note of the conch was heard rising gradually on the air, until the whole of the wide valley was filled with its rich and melancholy sound.

"Lip of man is not at the shell!" exclaimed the stranger, who like Dudley had made a forward movement toward the postern, the instant the blast reached his ear, and who like Dudley recoiled in an amazement that even his practised self-command could not conceal, as he undeniably perceived the truth of that his speech affirmed. "This exceedeth all former instances of marvellous visitations!"

"It is vain to pretend to raise the feeble nature of man to the level of things coming from the invisible world," returned the woodsman at his side. "In such a strait, it is seemly that sinful men should withdraw to the dwellings, where we may sustain our feebleness by the spiritual strivings of the captain."

To this discreet proposal the stranger raised no objection. Without taking the time necessary to effect their retreat with the precaution that had been observed in their advance, the two adventurers quickly found themselves at the secret entrance through which they had so lately issued.

"Enter," said the stranger, lowering the piece of the palisado for the passage of his companion. "Enter of a Heaven's sake! for it is truly meet that we assemble all our spiritual succor."

Dudley was in the act of complying, when a dark line, accompanied by a low rushing sound, cut the air between his head and that of his companion. At the next instant, a flint-headed arrow quivered in the timber.

"The heathen!" shouted the borderer, recovering all his manhood as the familiar danger became apparent, and throwing back a stream of fire in the direction from which the treacherous missile had come. "To the palisadoes, men! the bloody heathen is upon us!"

"The heathen!" echoed the stranger, in a deep, steady, commanding voice, that had evidently often raised the warning in scenes of even greater emergency, and levelling a pistol, which brought a dark form that was gliding across the snow to one knee, "The heathen! the bloody heathen is upon us!"

As if both assailants and assailed paused, one moment of profound stillness succeeded this fierce interruption of the quiet of the night. Then the cries of the two adventurers were answered by a burst of yells from a wide circle, that nearly environed the hill. At the same moment each dark object in the fields gave up a human form. The shouts were followed by a cloud of arrows, that rendered

further delay without the cover of the palisadoes eminently hazardous. Dudley entered; but the passage of the stranger would have been cut off by a leaping, whooping band that pressed fiercely on his rear, had not a broad sheet of flame, glancing from the hill directly in their swarthy and grim countenances, driven the assailants back upon their own footsteps. In another moment, the bolts of the lock were passed, and the two fugitives were in safety behind the ponderous piles of wood.

CHAPTER XII.

“There need no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.”—*Hamlet*.

ALTHOUGH the minds of most, if not of all the inmates of the Wish-Ton-Wish, had been so powerfully exercised that night with the belief that the powers of the invisible world were about to be let loose upon them, the danger had now presented itself in a shape too palpable to admit of further doubt. The cry of “the heathen” had been raised from every lip; even the daughter and élève of Ruth repeated it, as they fled wailing through the buildings; and, for a moment, terror and surprise appeared to involve the assailed in inextricable confusion. But the promptitude of the young men in rushing to the rescue, with the steadiness of Content, soon restored order. Even the females assumed at least the semblance of composure, the family having been too long trained to meet the exigencies of such an emergency to be thrown entirely off its guard, for more than the first and the most appalling moments of the alarm.

The effect of the sudden repulse was such as all experience had taught the colonists to expect, in their Indian warfare. The uproar of the onset ceased as abruptly as it had commenced, and a calmness so tranquil, and a stillness so profound, succeeded, that one who had for the first time witnessed such a scene, might readily have fancied it the effects of some wild and fearful illusion.

During these moments of general and deep silence, the two adventurers, whose retreat had probably hastened the assault by offering the temptation of an easy passage within the works, left the cover of the piles of wood, and

ascended the hill to the place where Dudley knew Content was to be posted in the event of a summons to the defences.

"Unless much inquiry hath deceived me in the nature of the heathen's craftiness," said the stranger, "we shall have breathing-time ere the onset be renewed. The experience of a soldier bids me say, that prudence now urges us to look into the number and position of our foes, that we may order our resistance with better understanding of their force."

"In what manner of way may this be done? Thou seest naught about us but the quiet and the darkness of night. Speak of the number of our enemies we cannot, and sally forth we may not, without certain destruction to all who quit the palisadoes."

"Thou forgettest that we have a hostage in the boy; he may be turned to some advantage, if our power over his person be used with discretion."

"I doubt that we deceive ourselves with a hope that is vain," returned Content, leading the way as he spoke, however, toward the court which communicated with the principal dwelling. "I have closely studied the eye of that lad, since his unaccountable entrance within the works, and little do I find there that should teach us to expect confidence. It will be happy if some secret understanding with those without has not aided him in passing the palisadoes, and that he prove not a dangerous spy on our force and movements."

"In regard to that he hath entered the dwelling without sound of conch or aid of postern, be not disturbed," returned the stranger with composure. "Were it fitting, this mystery might be of easy explanation; but it may truly need all our sagacity to discover whether he hath connection with our foes! The mind of a native does not give up its secrets like the surface of a vanity-feeding mirror."

The stranger spoke like a man who wrapped a portion of his thoughts in reserve, and his companion listened as one who comprehended more than it might be seemly or discreet to betray. With this secret and yet equivocal understanding of each other's meaning, they entered the dwelling, and soon found themselves in the presence of those they sought.

The constant danger of their situation had compelled the family to bring themselves within the habits of a

methodical and severely regulated order of defence. Duties were assigned, in the event of alarm, to the feeblest bodies and the faintest hearts ; and during the moments which preceded the visit of her husband, Ruth had been endeavoring to commit to her female subordinates the several necessary charges that usage, and more particularly the emergency of the hour, appeared so imperiously to require.

"Hasten, Charity, to the block," she said ; "and look into the condition of the buckets and the ladders, that should the heathen drive us to its shelter, provision of water, and means of retreat, be not wanting in our extremity ; and hie thee, Faith, into the upper apartments, to see that no lights may direct their murderous aim at any in the chambers. Thoughts come tardily, when the arrow or the bullet hath already taken its flight ! And now that the first assault is over, Mark, and we may hope to meet the wiles of the enemy by some prudence of our own, thou mayest go forth to thy father. It would have been tempting Providence too rashly, hadst thou rushed, unbidden and uninformed, into the first hurry of the danger. Come hither, child, and receive the blessing and prayers of thy mother ; after which thou shalt, with better trust in Providence, place thy young person among the combatants in the hope of victory. Remember that thou art now of an age to do justice to thy name and origin, and yet art thou of years too tender to be foremost in speech, and far less in action on such a night as this."

A momentary flush, that only served to render the succeeding paleness more obvious, passed across the brow of the mother. She stooped and imprinted a kiss on the forehead of the impatient boy, who scarcely waited to receive this act of tenderness, ere he hurried to place himself in the ranks of her defenders.

"And now," said Ruth, slowly turning her eye from the door by which the lad had disappeared, and speaking with a sort of unnatural composure, "and now we will look to the safety of those who can be of little service, except as sentinels to sound the alarm. When thou art certain, Faith, that no neglected light is in the rooms above, take the children to the secret chamber ; thence they may look upon the fields without danger from any chance direction of the savages' aim. Thou knowest, Faith, my frequent teaching in this matter ; let no sounds of alarm nor frightful whoopings of the people without,

cause thee to quit the spot ; since thou wilt there be safer than in the block, against which many missiles will doubtless be driven, on account of its seeming air of strength. Timely notice shall be given of the change, should we seek its security. Thou wilt descend only should'st thou see enemies scaling the palisadoes on the side which overhangs the stream ; since there have we the fewest eyes to watch their movements. Remember on the side of the outbuildings and of the fields, our force is chiefly posted ; there can be less reason, therefore, that thou should'st expose thy lives by endeavoring to look too curiously into that which passeth in the fields. Go, my children ; and a heavenly Providence prove thy guardian !”

Ruth stooped to kiss the cheek that her daughter offered to the salute. The embrace was then given to the other child, who was, in truth scarcely less near her heart, being the orphan daughter of one who had been as a sister in her affections. But, unlike the kiss she had impressed on the forehead of Mark, the present embraces were hasty, and evidently awakened less intense emotion. She had committed the boy to a known and positive danger, but, under the semblance of some usefulness, she sent the others to a place believed to be even less exposed, so long as the enemy could be kept without the works, than the citadel itself. Still, a feeling of deep and maternal tenderness came over her mind, as her daughter retired ; and yielding to its sudden impulse, she recalled the girl to her side.

“Thou wilt repeat the prayer for especial protection against the dangers of the wilderness,” she solemnly continued. “In thy asking, fail not to remember him to whom thou owest being, and who now exposeth life, that we may be safe. Thou knowest the Christian's rock ; place thy faith on its foundation.”

“And they who seek to kill us,” demanded the well-instructed child ; “are they too of the number of those for whom He died ?”

“It may not be doubted, though the manner of the dispensation be so mysterious ! Barbarians in their habits, and ruthless in their enmities, they are creatures of our nature, and equally objects of His care.”

Flaxen locks, that half covered a forehead and face across which ran the most delicate tracery of veins, added lustre to a skin as spotlessly fair as if the warm breezes of that latitude had never fanned the countenance of the girl. Through this maze of ringlets, the child turned her full,

clear, blue eyes, bending her looks, in wonder and in fear, on the dark visage of the captive Indian youth, who at that moment was to her a subject of secret horror. Unconscious of the interest he excited, the lad stood calm, haughty, and seemingly unobservant, cautious to let no sign of weakness or of concern escape him, in this scene of womanly emotion.

"Mother," whispered the still wondering child ; " may we not let him go into the forest ? I do not love to——"

"This is no time for speech. Go to thy hiding-place, my child, and remember both thy askings and the cautions I have named. Go, and heavenly care protect thy innocent head !"

Ruth again stooped, and bowing her face until the features were lost in the rich tresses of her daughter, a moment passed during which there was an eloquent silence. When she arose, a tear glistened on the cheek of the child. The latter had received the embrace more in apathy than in concern ; and now, when, led toward the upper rooms, she moved from the presence of her mother, it was with an eye that never bent its riveted gaze from the features of the young Indian, until the intervening walls hid him entirely from her sight.

"Thou hast been thoughtful and like thyself, my good Ruth," said Content, who at that moment entered, and who rewarded the self-command of his wife by a look of the kindest approbation. "The youths have not been more prompt in meeting the foe at the stockades, than thy maidens in looking to their less hardy duties. All is again quiet without ; and we come, now, rather for consultation, than for any purposes of strife."

"Then must we summon our father from his post at the artillery, in the block."

"It is not needful," interrupted the stranger. "Time presses, for this calm may be too shortly succeeded by a tempest that all our power shall not quell. Bring forth the captive."

Content signed to the boy to approach, and when he was in reach of his hand, he placed him full before the stranger.

"I know not thy name, nor even that of thy people," commenced the other, after a long pause, in which he seemed to study deeply the countenance of the lad ; "but certain am I, though a more wicked spirit may still be struggling for the mastery in thy wild mind, that nobleness

of feeling is no stranger to thy bosom. Speak ; hast thou aught to impart concerning the danger that besets this family ? I have learned much this night from thy manner, but to be clearly understood, it is now time that thou should'st speak in words."

The youth kept his eye fastened on that of the speaker, until the other had ended, and then he bent it slowly, but with searching observation, on the anxious countenance of Ruth. It seemed as if he balanced between his pride and his sympathies. The latter prevailed ; for, conquering the deep reluctance of an Indian, he spoke openly, and for the first time since his captivity, in the language of the hated race.

"I hear the whoops of warriors," was his calm answer. "Have the ears of the pale men been shut ?"

"Thou hast spoken with the young men of thy tribe in the forest, and thou had'st knowledge of this onset ?"

The youth made no reply, though the keen look of his interrogator was met steadily, and without fear. Perceiving that he had demanded more than would be answered, the stranger changed his mode of investigation, masking his inquiries with a little more of artifice.

"It may not be that a great tribe is on the bloody path!" he said ; "warriors would have walked over the timbers of the palisades like bending reeds ! 'Tis a Pequot, who hath broken faith with a Christian, and who is now abroad, prowling as a wolf in the night."

A sudden and wild expression gleamed over the swarthy features of the boy. His lips moved, and the words that issued from between them were uttered in the tones of biting scorn. Still he rather muttered than pronounced aloud—

"The Pequot is a dog !"

"It is as I had thought : the knaves are out of their villages, that the Yengeese may feed their squaws. But a Narragansett, or a Wampanoag, is a man ; he scorns to lurk in the darkness. When he comes, the sun will light his path. The Pequot steals in silence, for he fears that the warriors will hear his tread."

It was not easy to detect any evidence that the captive listened, either to the commendation or the censure, with answering sympathy ; for marble is not colder than were the muscles of his unmoved countenance.

The stranger studied the expression of his features in vain, and drawing so near as to lay his hand on the naked

shoulder of the lad, he added—"Boy, thou hast heard much moving matter concerning the nature of our Christian faith, and thou hast been the subject of many a fervent asking ; it may not be that so much good seed hath been altogether scattered by the way-side ! Speak ; may I again trust thee ?"

"Let my father look on the snow. The print of the moccason goes and comes."

"It is true. Thus far hast thou proved honest. But when the war-whoop shall be thrilling through thy young blood, the temptation to join the warriors may be too strong. Hast any gage, any pledge, in which we may find warranty for letting thee depart ?"

The boy regarded his interrogator with a look that plainly denoted ignorance of his meaning.

"I would know what thou canst leave with me, to show that our eyes shall again look upon thy face, when we have opened the gate for thy passage into the fields."

Still the gaze of the other was wondering and confused.

"When the white man goes upon the war path, and would put trust in his foe, he takes surety for his faith, by holding the life of one dear as a warranty of its truth. What can'st offer, that I may know thou wilt return from the errand on which I would fain send thee ?"

"The path is open."

"Open, but not certain to be used. Fear may cause thee to forget the way it leads."

The captive now understood the meaning of the other's doubts, but, as if disdaining to reply, he bent his eyes aside, and stood in one of those immovable attitudes which so often gave him the air of a piece of dark statuary.

Content and his wife had listened to this short dialogue, in a manner to prove that they possessed some secret knowledge, which lessened the wonder they might otherwise have felt, at witnessing so obvious proofs of a secret acquaintance between the speakers. Both, however, manifested unequivocal signs of astonishment, when they first heard English sounds issuing from the lips of the boy. There was, at least, the semblance of hope in the meditation of one who had received, and who had appeared to acknowledge, so much kindness from herself ; and Ruth clung to the cheering expectation with the quickness of maternal care.

"Let the boy depart," she said. "I will be his hostage ;

and should he prove false, there can be less to fear in his absence than in his presence."

The obvious truth of the latter assertion probably weighed more with the stranger than the unmeaning pledge of the woman.

"There is reason in this," he resumed. "Go, then, into the fields, and say to thy people that they have mistaken the path ; that, they are on, hath led them to the dwelling of a friend. Here are no Pequots, nor any of the men of the Manhattoes ; but Christian Yengeese, who have long dealt with the Indian as one just man dealeth with another. Go, and when thy signal shall be heard at the gate, it shall be opened to thee for readmission."

Thus saying, the stranger motioned to the boy to follow, taking care as they left the room together, to instruct him in all such minor matters as might assist in effecting the pacific object of the mission on which he was employed.

A few minutes of doubt and of fearful suspense succeeded this experiment. The stranger, after seeing that egress was permitted to his messenger, had returned to the dwelling and rejoined his companions. He passed the moments in pacing the apartment, with the strides of one in whom powerful concern was strongly at work. At times, the sound of his heavy footstep ceased, and then all listened intently, in order to catch any sound that might instruct them in the nature of the scene that was passing without. In the midst of one of these pauses, a yell like that of savage delight arose in the fields. It was succeeded by the death-like and portentous calm which had rendered the time since the momentary attack even more alarming than when the danger had a positive and known character. But all the attention the most intense anxiety could now lend, furnished no additional clew to the movements of their foes. For many minutes the quiet of midnight reigned both within and without the defences. In the midst of this suspense the latch of the door was lifted, and their messenger appeared with that noiseless tread and collected mien which distinguished the people of his race.

"Thou hast met the warriors of thy tribe?" hastily demanded the stranger.

"The noise did not cheat the Yengeese. It was not a girl laughing in the woods."

"And thou hast said to thy people, 'we are friends'?"

"The words of my father were spoken."

"And heard—Were they loud enough to enter the ears of the young men?"

The boy was silent.

"Speak," continued the stranger, elevating his form proudly, like one ready to breast a more severe shock. "Thou hast men for thy listeners. Is the pipe of the savage filled? Will he smoke in peace, or holdeth he the tomahawk in a clenched hand?"

The countenance of the boy worked with a feeling that it was not usual for an Indian to betray. He bent his look with concern on the mild eyes of the anxious Ruth; then drawing a hand slowly from beneath the light robe that partly covered his body, he cast at the feet of the stranger a bundle of arrows, wrapped in the glossy and striped skin of the rattlesnake.

"This is a warning we may not misconceive!" said Content, raising the well-known emblem of ruthless hostility to the light, and exhibiting it before the eyes of his less instructed companion. "Boy, what have the people of my race done, that thy warriors should seek their blood to this extremity?"

When the boy had discharged his duty he moved aside, and appeared unwilling to observe the effect which his message might produce on his companions. But thus questioned, all gentle feelings were near being forgotten in the sudden force of passion. A hasty glance at Ruth quelled the emotion, and he continued calm as ever, and silent.

"Boy," repeated Content, "I ask thee why thy people seek our blood?"

The passage of the electric spark is not more subtle, nor is it scarcely more brilliant than was the gleam that shot into the dark eye of the Indian. The organ seemed to emit rays coruscant as the glance of the serpent. His form appeared to swell with the inward strivings of the spirit, and for a moment there was every appearance of a fierce and uncontrollable burst of ferocious passion. The conquest of feeling was, however, but momentary. He regained his self-command by a surprising effort of will, and advancing so near to him who had asked this bold question, as to lay a finger on his breast, the young savage haughtily said—

"See! this world is very wide. There is room on it for the panther and the deer. Why have the Yengeese and the red-men met?"

"We waste the precious moments in probing the stern nature of a heathen," said the stranger. "The object of his people is certain, and, with the aid of the Christian's staff, we will beat back their power. Prudence requireth at our hands that the lad be secured ; after which, will we repair to the stockades and prove ourselves men."

Against this proposal no reasonable objection could be raised. Content was about to secure the person of his captive in a cellar, when a suggestion of his wife caused him to change his purpose. Notwithstanding the sudden and fierce mien of the youth, there had been such an intelligence created between them by looks of kindness and interest, that the mother was reluctant to abandon all hope of his aid.

"Miantonimoh !" she said, "though others distrust thy purpose, I will have confidence. Come, then, with me ; and while I give thee promise of safety in thine own person, I ask at thy hands the office of a protector for my babes."

The boy made no reply ; but as he passively followed his conductress to the chambers, Ruth fancied she read assurance of his faith in the expression of his eloquent eye. At the same moment her husband and Submission left the house to take their stations at the palisadoes.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Thou art my good youth : my page ;
I'll be thy master : walk with me ; speak freely."—*Cymbeline.*

THE apartment in which Ruth had directed the children to be placed was in the attic, and, as already stated, on the side of the building which faced the stream that ran at the foot of the hill. It had a single projecting window, through which there was a view of the forest and of the fields on that side of the valley. Small openings in its sides admitted also of glimpses of the grounds which lay further in the rear. In addition to the covering of the roofs, and of the massive frame-work of the building, an interior partition of timber protected the place against the entrance of most missiles then known in the warfare of the country. During the infancy of the children this room had been their sleeping apartment ; nor was it abandoned for that.

purpose until the additional outworks, which increased with time around the dwellings, had emboldened the family to trust themselves at night in situations more convenient, and which were believed to be no less equally secure against surprise.

"I know thee to be one who feeleth the obligations of a warrior," said Ruth, as she ushered her follower into the presence of the children. "Thou wilt not deceive me ; the lives of these tender ones are in thy keeping. Look to them, Miantonimoh, and the Christian's God will remember thee in thine own hour of necessity !"

The boy made no reply, but in a gentle expression which was visible in his dark visage, the mother endeavored to find the pledge she sought. Then, as the youth, with the delicacy of his race, moved aside in order that they who were bound to each other by ties so near might indulge their feelings without observation, Ruth again drew near her offspring with all the tenderness of a mother beaming in her eyes.

"Once more I bid thee not to look too curiously at the fearful strife that may arise in front of our habitation," she said. "The heathen is truly upon us, with bloody mind. Young as well as old must now show faith in the protection of our master ; and such courage as befitteth believers."

"And why is it, mother," demanded her child, "that they seek to do us harm ? Have we ever done evil to them ?"

"I may not say. He that hath made the earth, hath given it to us for our uses, and reason would seem to teach that if portions of its surface are vacant, he that needeth truly, may occupy."

"The savage !" whispered the child, nestling still nearer to the bosom of her stooping parent. "His eye glittereth like the star which hangs above the trees."

"Peace, daughter ; his fierce nature broodeth over some fancied wrong !"

"Surely, we are here rightfully. I have heard my father say that when the Lord made me a present to his arms, our valley was a tangled forest, and that much toil only has made it as it is."

"I hope that what we enjoy, we enjoy rightfully ! And yet it seemeth that the savage is ready to deny our claims."

"And where do these bloody enemies dwell ? Have they, too, valleys like this, and do the Christians break into them to shed blood in the night ?"

"They are of wild and fierce habits, Ruth, and little do they know of our manner of life. Woman is not cherished as among the people of thy father's race ; for force of body is more regarded than kinder ties."

The little auditor shuddered, and when she buried her face deeper in the bosom of her parent, it was with a more quickened sense of maternal affection, and with a livelier view than her infant perception had ever yet known of the gentle charities of kindred. When she had spoken, the matron impressed the final kiss on the forehead of each of the children, and asking aloud that God might bless them, she turned to go to the performance of duties that called for the exhibition of very different qualities. Before quitting the room, however, she once more approached the boy, and holding the light before his steady eye, she said solemnly—

"I trust my babes to the keeping of a young warrior !"

The look he returned was like the others, cold but not discouraging. A gaze of many moments elicited no reply ; and Ruth prepared to quit the place, troubled by uncertainty concerning the intentions of the guardian she left with the girls, while she still trusted that the many acts of kindness which she had shown him during his captivity, would not go without their reward. Her hand rested on the bolt of the door, in indecision. The moment was favorable to the character of the youth ; for she recalled the manner of his return that night, no less than his former acts of faith, and she was about to leave the passage for his egress open, when an uproar arose on the air which filled the valley with all the hideous cries and yells of a savage onset. Drawing the bolt, the startled woman descended, without further thought, and rushed to her post, with the hurry of one who saw only the necessity of exertion in another scene.

"Stand to the timbers, Reuben Ring ! Bear back the skulking murderers on their bloody followers ! The pikes ! Here, Dudley, is opening for thy valor. The Lord have mercy on the souls of the ignorant heathen !" mingled with the reports of musketry, the whoops of the warriors, the whizzing of bullets and arrows, with all the other accompaniments of such a contest, were the fearful sounds that saluted the senses of Ruth as she issued into the court. The valley was occasionally lighted by the explosion of fire-arms, and then, at times, the horrible din prevailed in the gloom of deep darkness. Happily, in the midst of all this

confusion and violence, the young men of the valley were true to their duties. An alarming attempt to scale the stockade had already been repulsed, and the true character of two or three feints having been ascertained, the principal force of the garrison was now actively employed in resisting the main attack.

"In the name of Him who is with us in every danger!" exclaimed Ruth, advancing to two figures that were so busily engaged in their own concerns, as not to heed her approach, "tell me how goes the struggle? Where are my husband and the boy? Or has it pleased Providence that any of our people should be stricken?"

"It hath pleased the Devil," returned Eben Dudley, somewhat irreverently for one of that chastened school, "to send an Indian arrow through jerkin and skin into this arm of mine! Softly, Faith; dost think, girl, that the covering of man is like the coat of a sheep, from which the fleece may be plucked at will? I am no moulting fowl, nor is this arrow a feather of my wing. The Lord forgive the rogue for the ill turn he hath done my flesh, say I, and amen like a Christian! He will have occasion too for the mercy, seeing he hath nothing further to hope for in this world. Now, Faith, I acknowledge the debt of thy kindness, and let there be no more cutting speech between us. Thy tongue often pricketh more sorely than the Indian's arrow."

"Whose fault is it that old acquaintance hath sometimes been overlooked in new conversations? Thou knowest that, wooed by proper speech, no maiden in the Colony is wont to render gentler answer. Dost feel uneasiness in thine arm, Dudley?"

"'Tis not tickling with a straw, to drive a flint-headed arrow to the bone! I forgive thee the matter of too much discourse with the trooper, and all the side-cuts of thy over-ambuling tongue, on conditions that——"

"Out upon thee, brawler! Would'st be prating here the night long on pretence of a broken skin, and the savage at our gates? A fine character will the madam render of thy deeds when the other youths have beaten back the Indian, and thou loitering among the buildings!"

The discomfited borderer was about to curse in his heart the versatile humor of his mistress, when he saw, by a side glance, that ears which had no concern in the subject had like to have shared in the matter of their discourse. Seizing the weapon which was leaning against the foundation

of the block, he hurried past the mistress of the family, and in another minute his voice and his musket were again heard ringing in the uproar.

"Does he bring tidings from the palisadoes?" repeated Ruth, too anxious that the young man should return to his post, to arrest his retreat. "What saith he of the onset?"

"The savage hath suffered for his boldness, and little harm hath yet come to our people. Except that yon block of a man hath managed to put arm before the passage of an arrow, I know not that any of our people have been harmed."

"Harken! they retire, Ruth. The yells are less near, and our young men will prevail! Go thou to thy charge among the piles of the fuel, and see that no lurker remaineth to do injury. The Lord hath remembered mercy, and it may yet arrive that this evil shall pass away from before us!"

The quick ear of Ruth had not deceived her. The tumult of the assault was gradually receding from the works, and though the flashings of the muskets and the bellowing reports that rang in the surrounding forest were not less frequent than before, it was plain that the critical moment of the onset was already past. In place of the fierce effort to carry the stockade by surprise, the savages had now resorted to means that were more methodical, and which, though not so appalling in appearance, were perhaps quite as certain of final success. Ruth profited by a momentary cessation in the flight of the missiles, to seek those in whose welfare she had placed her chief concern.

"Has other than brave Dudley suffered by this assault?" demanded the anxious wife, as she passed swiftly among a group of dusky figures that were collected in consultation on the brow of the declivity; "has any need of such care as a woman's hand may bestow? Heathcote, thy person is unharmed!"

"Truly, One of great mercy hath watched over it, for little opportunity hath been given to look to our own safety. I fear that some of our young men have not regarded the covers with the attention that prudence requires."

"The thoughtless Mark hath not forgotten my admonitions! Boy, thou hast never lost sight of duty so far as to precede thy father?"

"One sees or thinks little but of the red-skins when the whoop is ringing among the timbers of the palisadoes,

mother," returned the boy, dashing his hand across his brow, in order that the drops of blood which were trickling from a furrow left by the passage of an arrow, might not be seen. "I have kept near my father, but whether in his front or in his rear the darkness hath not permitted me to note."

"The lad hath behaved in a bold and seemly manner," said the stranger; "and he hath shown the metal of his grandsire's stock. Ha! what is't we see gleaming among the sheds? A sortie may be needed to save the granaries and thy folds from destruction!"

"To the barns! to the barns!" shouted two of the youths, from their several look-outs. "The brand is in the buildings!" exclaimed a maiden, who discharged a similar duty under cover of the dwellings. Then followed a discharge of muskets, all of which were levelled at the glancing light that was glaring in fearful proximity to the combustible materials which filled the most of the out-buildings. A savage yell, and the sudden extinguishment of the blazing knot, announced the fatal accuracy of the aim.

"This may not be neglected!" exclaimed Content, moved to extraordinary excitement by the extremity of the danger. "Father!" he called aloud, "'tis fitting time to show our utmost strength."

A moment of suspense succeeded this summons. The whole valley was then as suddenly lighted as if a torrent of the electric fluid had flashed across its gloomy bed; a sheet of flame glanced from the attic of the block, and then came the roar of the little piece of artillery, which had so long dwelt there in silence. The rattling of a shot among the sheds, and the rending of timber, followed. Fifty dark forms were seen by the momentary light gliding from among the out-buildings, in an alarm natural to their ignorance, and with an agility proportioned to their alarm. The moment was propitious. Content silently motioned to Reuben Ring; they passed the postern together, and disappeared in the direction of the barns. The period of their absence was one of intense care to Ruth, and it was not without its anxiety even to those whose nerves were better steeled. A few moments, however, served to appease these feelings; for the adventurers returned in safety and as silently as they had quitted the defences. The trampling of feet on the crust of the snow, the neighing of horses, and the bellowing of frightened cattle, as the terrified beasts scattered about the fields, soon proclaimed the object of the risk which had just been run.

“Enter,” whispered Ruth, who held the postern with her own hand. “Enter of Heaven’s mercy! Thou hast given liberty to every hoof, that no living creature perish by the flames?”

“All; and truly not too speedily—for, see—the brand is at work!”

Content had much reason to felicitate himself on his expedition; for, even while he spoke, half-concealed torches, made as usual of blazing knots of pine, were again seen glancing across the fields, evidently approaching the out-buildings, by such indirect and covered paths as might protect those who bore them from the shot of the garrison. A final and common effort was made to arrest the danger. The muskets of the young men were active, and more than once did the citadel of the stern old Puritan give forth its flood of flame, in order to beat back the dangerous visitants. A few shrieks of savage disappointment and of bodily anguish announced the success of these discharges; but though most of those who approached the barns were either driven back in fear or suffered for their temerity, one among them, more wary or more practised than his companions, found means to effect his object. The firing had ceased, and the besieged were congratulating themselves on success, when a sudden light glared across the fields. A sheet of flame soon came curling over the crest of a wheat-stack, and quickly wrapped the inflammable material in its fierce torrent. Against this destruction there remained no remedy. The barns and inclosures, which so lately had been lying in the darkness of the hour, were instantly illuminated, and life would have been the penalty paid by any of either party who should dare to trust his person within the bright glare. The borderers were soon compelled to fall back, even within the shadows of the hill, and to seek such covers as the stockades offered in order to avoid the aim of the arrow or the bullet.

“This is a mournful spectacle to one that has harvested in charity with all men,” said Content to the trembler who convulsively grasped his arm, as the flame whirled in the currents of the heated air, and sweeping once or twice across the roof of a shed, left a portion of its torrent creeping insidiously along the wooden covering. “The ingathering of a blessed season is about to melt into ashes before the brand of these accur——”

“Peace, Heathcote! What is wealth, or the fulness of thy granaries, to that which remains? Check these repin-

ings of thy spirit, and bless God that he leaveth us our babes, and the safety of our inner roofs."

"Thou sayest truly," returned the husband, endeavoring to imitate the meek resignation of his companion. "What indeed are the gifts of the world, set in the balance against the peace of mind—ha! that evil blast of wind sealeth the destruction of our harvest! The fierce element is in the heart of the granaries."

Ruth made no reply, for though less moved by worldly cares than her husband, the frightful progress of the conflagration alarmed her with a sense of personal danger. The flames had passed from roof to roof, and meeting everywhere with fuel of the most combustible nature, the whole of the vast range of barns, sheds, granaries, cribs, and out-buildings, was just breaking forth in the brightness of a torrent of fire. Until this moment, suspense, with hope on one side and apprehension on the other, had kept both parties mute spectators of the scene. But yells of triumph soon proclaimed the delight with which the Indians witnessed the completion of their fell design. Then whoops followed this burst of pleasure, and a third onset was made.

The combatants now fought under a brightness which, though less natural, was scarcely less brilliant than that of noonday. Stimulated by the prospect of success which was offered by the conflagration, the savages rushed upon the stockade with more audacity than it was usual to display in their cautious warfare. A broad shadow was cast, by the hill and its buildings, across the fields on the side opposite to the flames, and through this belt of comparative gloom, the fiercest of the band made their way to the very palisadoes with impunity. Their presence was announced by the yell of delight, for too many curious eyes had been drinking in the fearful beauty of the conflagration to note their approach until the attack had nearly proved successful. The rushes to the defence and to the attack were now alike quick and headlong. Volleys were useless, for the timbers offered equal security to both assailant and assailed. It was a struggle of hand to hand, in which numbers would have prevailed, had it not been the good fortune of the weaker party to act on the defensive. Blows of the knife were passed swiftly between the timbers, and occasionally the discharge of the musket, or the twanging of the bow, was heard.

"Stand to the timbers, my men!" said the deep tones of

the stranger, who spoke in the midst of the fierce struggle with that commanding and stirring cheerfulness that familiarity with danger can alone inspire. "Stand to the defences, and they are impassable. Ha! 'twas well meant, friend savage," he muttered between his teeth, as he parried, at some jeopardy to one hand, a thrust aimed at his throat, while with the other he seized the warrior who had inflicted the blow, and drawing his naked breast with the power of a giant, full against the opening between the timbers, he buried his own keen blade to its haft in the body. The eyes of the victim rolled wildly, and when the iron hand which bound him to the wood with the power of a vice, loosened its grasp, he fell motionless on the earth. This death was succeeded by the usual yell of disappointment, and the assailants disappeared as swiftly as they had approached.

"God be praised, that we have to rejoice in this advantage!" said Content, enumerating the individuals of his force, with an anxious eye, when all were again assembled at the stand on the hill, where, favored by the glaring light, they could overlook in comparative security the more exposed parts of their defences. "We count our own, though I fear me many may have suffered."

The silence and the occupations of his listeners, most of whom were stanching their blood, was a sufficient answer.

"Hist, father!" said the quick-eyed and observant Mark; "one remaineth on the palisado nearest the wicket. Is it a savage? or do I see a stump in the field beyond?"

All eyes followed the direction of the hand of the speaker, and there was seen, of a certainty, something clinging to the inner side of one of the timbers, that bore a marked resemblance to the human form. The part of the stockades, where the seeming figure clung, lay more in obscurity than the rest of the defences, and doubts as to its character were not alone confined to the quick-sighted lad who had first detected its presence.

"Who hangs upon our palisadoes?" called Eben Dudley. "Speak, that we do not harm a friend!"

The wood itself was not more immovable than the dark object, until the report of the borderer's musket was heard, and then it came tumbling to the earth like an insensible mass.

"Fallen like a stricken bear from his tree! Life was in it, or no bullet of mine could have loosened the hold!"

exclaimed Dudley, a little in exultation, as he saw the success of his aim.

"I will go forward, and see that he is past——"

The mouth of young Mark was stopped by the hand of the stranger, who calmly observed—

"I will look into the fate of the heathen, myself." He was about to proceed to the spot, when the supposed dead or wounded man sprang to his feet, with a yell that rang in echoes along the margin of the forest, and bounded toward the cover of the buildings with high and active leaps. Two or three muskets sent their streaks of flame across his path, but seemingly without success. Jumping in a manner to elude the certainty of their fire, the unharmed savage gave forth another yell of triumph, and disappeared among the angles of the dwellings. His cries were understood, for answering whoops were heard in the fields, and the foe without again rallied to the attack.

"This may not be neglected," said he who, more by his self-possession and air of authority, than by any known right to command, had insensibly assumed so much control in the important business of that night. "One like this, within our walls, may quickly bring destruction on the garrison. The postern may be opened to an inroad——"

"A triple lock secures it," interrupted Content. "The key is hid where none know to seek it, other than such as are of our household."

"And happily the means of passing the private wicket are in my possession," muttered the other, in an undertone. "So far, well; but the brand! the brand! the maidens must look to the fires and lights, while the youths make good the stockade, since this assault admitteth not of further delay."

So saying, the stranger gave an example of courage by proceeding to his stand at the pickets, where, supported by his companions, he continued to defend the approaches against a discharge of arrows and bullets that was more distant, but scarcely less dangerous to the safety of those who showed themselves on the side of the acclivity, than those which had been previously showered upon the garrison.

In the meantime, Ruth summoned her assistants, and hastened to discharge the duty which had just been prescribed. Water was cast freely on all the fires, and, as the still raging conflagration continued to give far more light than was either necessary or safe, care was taken to extin-

guish any torch or candle that, in the hurry of alarm, might have been left to moulder in its socket, throughout the extensive range of the dwellings and the offices.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Thou mild, sad mother—

Quit him not so soon!

Mother, in mercy, stay!

Despair and death are with him; and canst thou,

With that kind, earthward look, go leave him now?"

—DANA.

WHEN these precautions were taken, the females returned to their several look-outs, and Ruth, whose duty it was in moments of danger to exercise a general superintendence, was left to her meditations and to such watchfulness as her fears might excite. Quitting the inner rooms, she approached the door that communicated with the court, and for a moment lost the recollection of her immediate cares in a view of the imposing scene by which she was surrounded.

By this time, the whole of the vast range of out-buildings which had been constructed—as was usual in the colonies—of the most combustible materials and with no regard to the expenditure of wood, was wrapt in fire. Notwithstanding the position of the intermediate edifices, broad flashes of light were constantly crossing the court itself, on whose surface she was able to distinguish the smallest object, while the heavens above her were glaring with a lurid red. Through the openings between the buildings of the quadrangle, the eye could look out upon the fields, where she saw every evidence of a sullen intention on the part of the savages to persevere in their object. Dark, fierce-looking, and nearly naked human forms were seen flitting from cover to cover, while there was no stump nor log within arrow's flight of the defences, that did not protect the person of a daring and indefatigable enemy. It was plain the Indians were there in hundreds, and as the assaults continued after the failure of a surprise, it was too evident that they were bent on victory, at some hazard to themselves. No usual means of adding to the horrors of the scene were neglected. Whoops and yells were incessantly ringing around the place, while the loud

and often-repeated tones of a conch betrayed the artifice by which the savages had so often endeavored, in the earlier part of the night, to lure the garrison out of the palisades. A few scattering shot, discharged with deliberation and from every exposed point within the works, proclaimed both the coolness and the vigilance of the defendants. The little gun in the block-house was silent ; for the Puritan knew too well its real power to lessen its reputation by a too frequent use. The weapon was therefore reserved for those moments of pressing danger that would be sure to arrive.

On this spectacle Ruth gazed in fearful sadness. The long-sustained and sylvan security of her abode was violently destroyed, and in the place of a quiet which had approached as near as may be on earth to that holy peace for which her spirit strove, she and all she most loved were suddenly confronted to the most frightful exhibition of human horrors. In such a moment, the feelings of a mother were likely to revive ; and ere time was given for reflection, aided by the light of the conflagration, the matron was moving swiftly through the intricate passages of the dwelling, in quest of those whom she had placed in the security of the chambers.

"Thou hast remembered to avoid looking on the fields, my children," said the nearly breathless woman as she entered the room. "Be thankful, babes ; hitherto the efforts of the savages have been vain, and we still remain masters of our habitations."

"Why is the night so red ? Come hither, mother ; thou mayest look into the wood as if the sun were shining !"

"The heathens have fired our granaries, and what thou seest is the light of the flames. But happily they cannot put brand into the dwellings, while thy father and the young men stand to their weapons. We must be grateful for this security, frail as it seemeth. Thou hast knelt, my Ruth, and hast remembered to think of thy father and brother in thy prayers."

"I will do so again, mother," whispered the child, bending to her knees, and wrapping her young features in the garments of the matron.

"Why hide thy countenance ? One young and innocent as thou may lift thine eyes to Heaven with confidence"

"Mother, I see the Indian unless my face be hid. He looketh at me, I fear, with wish to do us harm."

"Thou art not just to Miantonimoh, child," answered Ruth, as she glanced her eye rapidly round to seek the boy, who had modestly withdrawn into a remote and shaded corner of the room. "I left him with thee for a guardian, and not as one who would wish to injure. Now think of thy God, child," imprinting a kiss on the cold, marble-like forehead of her daughter, "and have reliance in His goodness. Miantonimoh, I again leave you with a charge to be their protector," she added, quitting her daughter and advancing toward the youth.

"Mother!" shrieked the child, "come to me, or I die!"

Ruth turned from the listening captive with the quickness of instinct. A glance showed her the jeopardy of her offspring. A naked savage, dark, powerful of frame, and fierce in the frightful masquerade of his war-paint, stood winding the silken hair of the girl in one hand, while he already held the glittering axe above a head that seemed inevitably devoted to destruction.

"Mercy! mercy!" exclaimed Ruth, hoarse with horror, and dropping to her knees, as much from inability to stand as with intent to petition. "Monster, strike me; but spare the child!"

The eyes of the Indian rolled over the person of the speaker, but it was with an expression that seemed rather to enumerate the number of his victims than to announce any change of purpose. With a fiend-like coolness that bespoke much knowledge of the ruthless practice, he again swung the quivering but speechless child in the air, and prepared to direct the weapon with a fell certainty of aim. The tomahawk had made its last circuit, and an instant would have decided the fate of the victim, when the captive boy stood in front of the frightful actor in this revolting scene. By a quick, forward movement of his arm, the blow was arrested. The deep guttural ejaculation which betrays the surprise of an Indian, broke from the chest of the savage, while his hand fell to his side, and the form of the suspended girl was suffered again to touch the floor. The look and gesture with which the boy had interfered, expressed authority rather than resentment or horror. His air was calm, collected, and, as it appeared by the effect, imposing.

"Go," he said, in the language of the fierce people from whom he had sprung; "the warriors of the pale men are calling thee by name."

"The snow is red with the blood of our young men."

the other fiercely answered ; " and not a scalp is at the belt of my people."

" These are mine," returned the boy, with dignity, sweeping his arm while speaking, in a manner to show that he extended protection to all present.

The warrior gazed about him grimly, and like one but half-convinced. He had incurred a danger too fearful in entering the stockade to be easily diverted from his purpose.

" Listen!" he continued, after a short pause, during which the artillery of the Puritan had again bellowed in the uproar without. " The thunder is with the Yengeese ! Our young women will look another way, and call us Pequots, should there be no scalps on our pole."

For a single moment the countenance of the boy changed, and his resolution seemed to waver. The other, who watched his eyes with longing eagerness, again seized his victim by the hair, when Ruth shrieked in the accents of despair—

" Boy ! boy ! if thou art not with us, God hath deserted us !"

" She is mine," burst fiercely from the lips of the lad. " Hear my words, Wompahwisset : the blood of my father is very warm within me."

The other paused, and the blow was once more suspended. The glaring eyeballs of the savage rested intently on the swelling form and stern countenance of the young hero, whose uplifted hand appeared to menace instant punishment, should he dare to disregard the mediation. The lips of the warrior severed, and the word " Miantonimoh " was uttered as softly as if it recalled a feeling of sorrow. Then, as a sudden burst of yells rose above the roar of the conflagration, the fierce Indian turned in his tracks, and abandoning the trembling and nearly insensible child, he bounded away like a hound loosened on a fresh scent of blood.

" Boy ! boy !" murmured the mother ; heathen or Christian, there is one that will bless thee——"

A rapid gesture of the hand interrupted the fervent expression of her gratitude. Pointing after the form of the retreating savage, the lad encircled his own head with a finger, in a manner that could not be mistaken, as he uttered steadily, but with the deep emphasis of an Indian—

" The young pale-face has a scalp !"

Ruth heard no more. With instinctive rapidity, every feeling of her soul quickened nearly to agony, she rushed below, in order to warn Mark against the machinations of so fearful an enemy. Her step was heard but for a moment in the vacant chambers, and then the Indian boy, whose steadiness and authority had just been so signally exerted in favor of the children, resumed his attitude of meditation as quietly as if he took no further interest in the frightful events of the night.

The situation of the garrison was now, indeed, to the last degree critical. A torrent of fire had passed from the further extremity of the out-houses to that which stood nearest to the defences; and as building after building melted beneath its raging power, the palisadoes became heated nearly to the point of ignition. The alarm created by this imminent danger had already been given, and when Ruth issued into the court a female was rushing past her, seemingly on some errand of the last necessity.

"Hast seen him?" demanded the breathless mother, arresting the steps of the quick-moving girl.

"Not since the savage made his last onset; but I warrant me he may be found near the western loops, making good the works against the enemy!"

"Surely he is not foremost in the fray! Of whom speakest thou, Faith? I questioned thee of Mark. There is one, even now, raging within the pickets, seeking a victim."

"Truly, I thought it had been a question of—the boy is with his father and the stranger soldier, who does such deeds of valor in our behalf. I have seen no enemy within the palisadoes, Madam Heathcote, since the entry of the man who escaped, by favor of the powers of darkness, from the shot of Eben Dudley's musket."

"And is this evil like to pass from us," resumed Ruth, breathing more freely, as she learned the safety of her son, "or does Providence veil its face in anger?"

"We keep our own, though the savage hath pressed the young men to extremity. Oh! it gladdened heart to see how brave a guard Rueben Ring and others near him made in our behalf. I do think me, Madam Heathcote, that after all there is real manhood in the brawler Dudley! Truly, the youth hath done marvels in the way of exposure and resistance. Twenty times this night have I expected to see him slain."

"And he that lieth there?" half-whispered the alarmed Ruth, pointing to a spot near them, where, aside from the movements of those that still acted in the bustle of the combat, one lay stretched on the earth—"who hath fallen?"

The cheek of Faith blanched to a whiteness that nearly equalled that of the linen, which, even in the hurry of such a scene, some friendly hand had found leisure to throw in decent sadness over the form.

"That!" said the faltering girl; "though hurt and bleeding, my brother Reuben surely keepeth the loop at the western angle; nor is Whittal wanting in sufficient sense to take heed of danger. This may not be the stranger, for under the covers of the postern breastwork he holdeth counsel with the young captain."

"Art certain, girl?"

"I saw them both within the minute. Would to God we could hear the shout of noisy Dudley, Madam Heathcote; his cry cheereth the heart, in a moment awful as this!"

"Lift the cloth," said Ruth, with calm solemnity, "that we may know which of our friends hath been called to the great account."

Faith hesitated; and when by a powerful effort, in which secret interest had as deep an influence as obedience, she did comply, it was with a sort of desperate resolution. On raising the linen, the eyes of the two women rested on the pallid countenance of one who had been transfixed by an iron-headed arrow. The girl dropped the linen, and in a voice that sounded like a burst of hysterical feeling, she exclaimed—

"'Tis but the youth that came lately among us! We are spared the loss of any ancient friend."

"'Tis one who died for our safety. I would give largely of this world's comforts, that this calamity might not have been, or that greater leisure for the last fearful reckoning had been accorded. But we may not lose the moments in mourning. Hie thee, girl, and sound the alarm that a savage lurketh within our walls, and that he skulketh in quest of a secret blow. Bid all be wary. If the young Mark should cross thy path, speak to him twice of this danger; the child hath a froward spirit, and may not hearken to words uttered in too great hurry."

With this charge Ruth quitted her maiden. While the latter proceeded to give the necessary notice, the other

sought the spot where she had just learned there was reason to believe her husband might be found.

Content and the stranger were in fact met in consultation over the danger which threatened destruction to their most important means of defence. The savages themselves appeared to be conscious that the flames were working in their favor; for their efforts sensibly slackened, and having already severely suffered in their attempts to annoy the garrison, they had fallen back to their covers, and awaited the moment when their practised cunning should tell them they might, with more flattering promises of success, again rally to the onset. A brief explanation served to make Ruth acquainted with the imminent jeopardy of their situation. Under a sense of a more appalling danger she lost the recollection of her former purpose, and with a contracted and sorrowing eye she stood like her companions, in impotent helplessness, an entranced spectator of the progress of the destruction.

"A soldier should not waste words in useless complaints," observed the stranger, folding his arms like one who was conscious that human effort could do no more, "else should I say, 'tis pity that he who drew yon line of stockade hath not remembered the uses of the ditch."

"I will summon the maidens to the wells," said Ruth.

"'Twill not avail us. The arrow would be among them, nor could mortal long endure the heat of yon glowing furnace. Thou seest that the timbers already smoke and blacken under its fierceness."

The stranger was still speaking, when a small quivering flame played on the corners of the palisado nearest the burning pile. The element fluttered like a waving line along the edges of the heated wood, after which it spread over the whole surface of the timber, from its larger base to the pointed summit. As if this had merely been the signal of a general destruction, the flames kindled in fifty places at the same instant, and then the whole line of the stockade, nearest the conflagration, was covered with fire. A yell of triumph arose in the fields, and a flight of arrows, sailing tauntingly into the works, announced the fierce impatience of those who watched the increase of the conflagration.

"We shall be driven to our block," said Content. "Assemble thy maidens, Ruth, and make speedy preparation for the last retreat."

"I go; but hazard not thy life in any vain endeavor to

retard the flames. There will yet be time for all that is needful to our security."

"I know not," hurriedly observed the stranger. "Here cometh the assault in a new aspect!"

The feet of Ruth were arrested. On looking upwards she saw the object which had drawn this remark from the last speaker. A small bright ball of fire had arisen out of the fields, and, describing an arc in the air, it sailed above their heads and fell on the shingles of a building which formed part of the quadrangle of the inner court. The movement was that of an arrow thrown from a distant bow, and its way was to be traced by a long trail of light, that followed its course like a blazing meteor. This burning arrow had been sent with a cool and practised judgment. It lighted upon a portion of the combustibles that were nearly as inflammable as gunpowder, and the eye had scarcely succeeded in tracing it to its fall, ere the bright flames were seen stealing over the heated roof.

"One struggle for our habitations!" cried Content—but the hand of the stranger was placed firmly on his shoulder. At that instant, a dozen similar meteor-looking balls shot into the air, and fell in as many different places on the already half-kindled pile. Further efforts would have been useless. Relinquishing the hope of saving his property, every thought was now given to personal safety.

Ruth recovered from her short trance, and hastened with hurried steps to perform her well-known office. Then came a few minutes of exertion, during which the females transferred all that was necessary to their subsistence, and which had not been already provided in the block, to their little citadel. The glowing light, which penetrated the darkest passages among the buildings, prevented this movement from being made without discovery. The whoop summoned their enemies to another attack. The arrows thickened in the air, and the important duty was not performed without risk, as all were obliged, in some degree, to expose their persons, while passing to and fro loaded with necessaries. The gathering smoke, however, served in some measure for a screen; and it was not long before Content received the welcome tidings that he might command the retreat of his young men from the palisades. The conch sounded the necessary signal, and ere the foe had time to understand its meaning, or profit by the defenceless state of the works, every individual within them

had reached the door of the block in safety. Still, there was more of hurry and confusion than altogether comported with their safety. They who were assigned to that duty, however, mounted eagerly to the loops, and stood in readiness to pour out their fire on whoever might dare to come within its reach, while a few still lingered in the court, to see that no necessary provision for resistance, or of safety, was forgotten. Ruth had been foremost in exertion, and she now stood pressing her hands to her temples, like one whose mind was bewildered by her own efforts.

"Our fallen friend!" she said. "Shall we leave his remains to be mangled by the savage?"

"Surely not; Dudley, thy hand. We will bear the body within the lower—ha! death hath struck another of our family."

The alarm with which Content made this discovery passed quickly to all in hearing. It was but too apparent, by the shape of the linen, that two bodies lay beneath its folds. Anxious and rapid looks were cast from face to face, in order to learn who was missing; and then, conscious of the hazard of further delay, Content raised the linen, in order to remove all doubts by certainty. The form of the young borderer, who was known to have fallen, was first slowly and reverently uncovered; but even the most self-restrained among the spectators started back in horror, as his robbed and reeking head showed that a savage hand had worked its ruthless will on the unresisting corpse.

"The other!" Ruth struggled to say, and it was only as her husband had half removed the linen that she could succeed in uttering the words—"Beware the other!"

The warning was not useless, for the linen waved violently as it rose under the hand of Content, and a grim Indian sprang into the very centre of the startled group. Sweeping his armed hand widely about him, the savage broke through the receding circle, and giving forth the appalling whoop of his tribe, he bounded into the open door of the principal dwelling, so swiftly as utterly to defeat any design of pursuit. The arms of Ruth were frantically extended towards the place where he had disappeared, and she was about to rush madly on his footsteps, when the hand of her husband stopped the movement.

"Would'st hazard life, to save some worthless trifle?"

"Husband, release me!" returned the woman, nearly choked with her agony—"nature hath slept within me."

"Fear blindeth thy reason!"

The form of Ruth ceased to struggle. All the madness which had been glaring wildly about her eyes, disappeared in the settled look of an almost preternatural calm. Collecting the whole of her mental energy in one desperate effort of self-command, she turned to her husband, and, as her bosom swelled with the terror that seemed to stop her breath, she said in a voice that was frightful by its composure—

"If thou hast a father's heart, release me. Our babes have been forgotten!"

The hand of Content relaxed its hold, and, in another instant, the form of his wife was lost to view on the track that had just been taken by the successful savage. This was the luckless moment chosen by the foe to push his advantage. A fierce burst of yells proclaimed the activity of the assailant, and a general discharge from the loops of the block-house sufficiently apprised those in the court that the onset of the enemy was now pushed into the very heart of the defences. All had mounted, but the few who lingered to discharge the melancholy duty to the dead. They were too few to render resistance prudent, and yet too many to think of deserting the distracted mother and her offspring without an effort.

"Enter," said Content, pointing to the door of the block. "It is my duty to share the fate of those nearest my blood."

The stranger made no answer. Placing his powerful hands on the nearly stupefied husband, he thrust his person, by an irresistible effort, within the basement of the building, and then he signed, by a quick gesture, for all around him to follow. After the last form had entered, he commanded that the fastenings of the door should be secured, remaining himself, as he believed, alone without. But when by a rapid glance he saw there was another gazing in dull awe on the features of the fallen man, it was too late to rectify the mistake. Yells were now rising out of the black smoke that was rolling in volumes from the heated buildings, and it was plain that only a few feet divided them from their pursuers. Beckoning the man who had been excluded from the block to follow, the stern soldier rushed into the principal dwelling, which was still but little injured by the fire. Guided rather by chance than by any knowledge of the windings of the building, he soon found himself in the chambers. He was now at a

loss whither to proceed. At that moment, his companion, who was no other than Whittal Ring, took the lead, and in another instant they were at the door of the secret apartment.

"Hist!" said the stranger, raising a hand to command silence as he entered the room. "Our hope is in secrecy."

"And how may we escape without detection?" demanded the mother, pointing about her at objects illuminated by a light so powerful as to penetrate every cranny of the ill-constructed building. "The noonday sun is scarce brighter than this dreadful fire!"

"God is in the elements! His guiding hand shall point the way. But here we may not tarry, for the flames are already on the shingles. Follow, and speak not."

Ruth pressed the children to her side, and the whole party left the apartment of the attic in a body. Their descent to a lower room was made quickly, and without discovery. But here their leader paused, for the state of things without was one to demand the utmost steadiness of nerve, and great reflection.

The Indians had by this time gained command of the whole of Mark Heathcote's possessions, with the exception of the block-house; and as their first act had been to apply the brand wherever it might be wanting, the roar of the conflagration was now heard in every direction. The discharge of muskets and the whoops of the combatants, however, while they added to the horrible din of such a scene, proclaimed the unconquered resolution of those who held the citadel. A window of the room they occupied enabled the stranger to take a cautious survey of what was passing without. The court, lighted to the brilliancy of day, was empty; for the increasing heat of the fires, no less than the discharges from the loops, still kept the cautious savages to their covers. There was barely hope, that the space between the dwelling and the block-house might yet be passed in safety.

"I would I had asked that the door of the block should be held in hand," muttered Submission; "it would be death to linger an instant in that fierce light; nor have we any manner of——"

A touch was laid upon his arm, and turning, the speaker saw the dark eye of the captive boy looking steadily in his face.

"Wilt do it?" demanded the other, in a manner to show that he doubted, while he hoped.

A speaking gesture of assent was the answer, and then the form of the lad was seen gliding quietly from the room.

Another instant, and Miantonimoh appeared in the court. He walked with the deliberation that one would have shown in moments of the most entire security. A hand was raised toward the loops, as if to betoken amity, and then dropping the limb, he moved with the same slow step into the very centre of the area. Here the boy stood in the fullest glare of the conflagration, and turned his face deliberately on every side of him. The action showed that he wished to invite all eyes to examine his person. At this moment the yells ceased in the surrounding covers, proclaiming alike the common feeling that was awakened by his appearance, and the hazard that any other would have incurred by exposing himself in that fearful scene. When this act of exceeding confidence had been performed, the boy drew a pace nearer to the entrance of the block.

"Comest thou in peace, or is this another device of Indian treachery?" demanded a voice, through an opening in the door left expressly for the purposes of parley.

The boy raised the palm of one hand toward the speaker, while he laid the other with a gesture of confidence on his naked breast.

"Hast aught to offer in behalf of my wife and babes? If gold will buy their ransom, name thy price."

Miantonimoh was at no loss to comprehend the other's meaning. With the readiness of one whose faculties had been early schooled in the inventions of emergencies, he made a gesture that said even more than his figurative words, as he answered—

"Can a woman of the pale-faces pass through wood? An Indian arrow is swifter than the foot of my mother."

"Boy, I trust thee," returned the voice from within the loop. "If thou deceivest beings so feeble and so innocent, Heaven will remember the wrong."

Miantonimoh again made a sign to show that caution must be used, and then he retired with a step calm and measured as that used in his advance. Another pause to the shouts betrayed the interest of those whose fierce eyes watched his movements in the distance.

When the young Indian had rejoined the party in the dwelling, he led them, without being observed by the lurking band that still hovered in the smoke of the surrounding buildings, to a spot that commanded a full view of their short but perilous route. At this moment the door

of the block-house half opened, and was closed again. Still the stranger hesitated, for he saw how little was the chance that all should cross the court unharmed, and to pass it by repeated trials he knew to be impossible.

"Boy," he said, "thou, who hast done thus much, may still do more. Ask mercy for these children, in some manner that may touch the hearts of thy people."

Miantonimoh shook his head, and pointing to the ghastly corpse that lay in the court, he answered coldly—

"The red man has tasted blood"

"Then must the desperate trial be done! Think not of thy children, devoted and daring mother, but look only to thine own safety. This witless youth and I will charge ourselves with the care of the innocents."

Ruth waved him away with her hand, pressing her mute and trembling daughter to her bosom, in a manner to show that her resolution was taken. The stranger yielded, and turning to Whittal, who stood near him, seemingly as much occupied in vacant admiration of the blazing piles as in any apprehension of his own personal danger, he bade him look to the safety of the remaining child. Moving in front himself, he was about to offer Ruth such protection as the case afforded, when a window in the rear of the house was dashed inwards, announcing the entrance of the enemy, and the imminent danger that their flight would be intercepted. There was no time to lose, for it was now certain that only a single room separated them from their foes. The generous nature of Ruth was aroused, and catching Martha from the arms of Whittal Ring, she endeavored by a desperate effort, in which feeling rather than any reasonable motive predominated, to envelop both the children in her robe.

"I am with ye!" whispered the agitated woman: "hush ye, hush ye, babes! thy mother is nigh!"

The stranger was very differently employed. The instant the crash of glass was heard, he rushed to the rear; and he had already grappled with the savage so often named, and who acted as guide to a dozen fierce and yelling followers.

"To the block!" shouted the steady soldier, while with a powerful arm he held his enemy in the throat of the narrow passage, stopping the approach of those in the rear by the body of his foe. "For the love of life and children, woman, to the block!"

The summons rang frightfully in the ears of Ruth, but in

that moment of extreme jeopardy her presence of mind was lost. The cry was repeated, and not till then did the bewildered mother catch her daughter from the floor. With eyes still bent on the fierce struggle in her rear, she clasped the child to her heart and fled, calling on Whittal Ring to follow. The lad obeyed, and ere she had half crossed the court the stranger, still holding his savage shield between him and his enemies, was seen endeavoring to take the same direction. The whoops, the flight of arrows, and the discharges of musketry that succeeded, proclaimed the whole extent of the danger. But fear had lent unnatural vigor to the limbs of Ruth, and the gliding arrows themselves scarce sailed more swiftly through the heated air than she darted into the open door of the block. Whittal Ring was less successful. As he crossed the court, bearing the child intrusted to his care, an arrow pierced his flesh. Stung by the pain, the witless lad turned in anger to chide the hand that had inflicted the injury.

"On, foolish boy!" cried the stranger, as he passed him, still making a target of the body of the savage that was writhing in his grasp. "On, for thy life, and that of the babe!"

The mandate came too late. The hand of an Indian was already on the innocent victim, and in the next instant the child was sweeping the air, while with a short yell the keen axe flourished above his head. A shot from the loops laid the monster dead in his tracks. The girl was instantly seized by another hand, and as the captor with his prize darted unharmed into the dwelling, there arose in the block a common exclamation of the name of "Miantonimoh!" Two more of the savages profited by the pause of horror that followed, to lay hands on the wounded Whittal and to drag him within the blazing building. At the same moment, the stranger cast the unresisting savage back upon the weapons of his companions. The bleeding and half-strangled Indian met the blows which had been aimed at the life of the soldier, and as he staggered and fell, his vigorous conqueror disappeared in the block. The door of the little citadel was instantly closed, and the savages, who rushed headlong against the entrance, heard the fitting of the bars which secured it against their attacks. The yell of retreat was raised, and in the next instant the court was left to the possession of the dead.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Did Heaven look on,
And would not take their part?—
Heaven rest them now ? ”—*Macbeth.*

“ WE will be thankful for this blessing,” said Content, as he aided the half-unconscious Ruth to mount the ladder, yielding himself to a feeling of nature that said little against his manhood. “ If we have lost one that we loved, God hath spared our own child ! ”

His breathless wife threw herself into a seat, and folding the treasure to her bosom, she whispered rather than said aloud—“ From my soul, Heathcote, am I grateful ! ”

“ Thou shieldest the babe from my sight,” returned the father, stooping to conceal a tear that was stealing down his brown cheek, under the pretence of embracing the child—but suddenly recoiling, he added in alarm—“ Ruth ! ”

Startled by the tone in which her husband uttered her name, the mother threw aside the folds of her dress which still concealed the girl, and stretching her out to the length of an arm, she saw that, in the hurry of the appalling scene, the children had been exchanged, and that she had saved the life of Martha !

Notwithstanding the generous disposition of Ruth, it was impossible to repress the feeling of disappointment which came over her with the consciousness of the mistake. Nature at first had sway, and to a degree that was fearfully powerful.

“ It is not our babe ! ” shrieked the mother, still holding the child at the length of her arm, and gazing at its innocent and terrified countenance, with an expression that Martha had never yet seen gleaming from eyes that were in common so soft and so indulgent.

“ I am thine ! I am thine ! ” murmured the little trembler, struggling in vain to reach the bosom that had so long cherished her infancy. “ If not thine, whose am I ? ”

The gaze of Ruth was still wild—the workings of her features hysterical.

“ Madam—Mrs. Heathcote—mother ! ” came timidly and at intervals, from the lips of the orphan. Then the heart of Ruth relented. She clasped the daughter of her friend to her breast, and nature found a temporary relief in one

of those frightful exhibitions of anguish which appear to threaten the dissolution of the link which connects the soul with the body.

"Come, daughter of John Harding," said Content, looking around him with the assumed composure of a chastened man, while natural regret struggled hard at his heart; "this has been God's pleasure. It is meet that we kiss His parental hand. Let us be thankful," he added, with a quivering lip but steady eye, "that even this mercy hath been shown. Our babe is with the Indian, but our hopes are far beyond the reach of savage malignity. We have not 'laid up treasure where moth and rust can corrupt, or where thieves may break in and steal.' It may be that the morning shall bring means of parley, and haply, opportunity of ransom."

There was the glimmering of hope in this suggestion. The idea seemed to give a new direction to the thoughts of Ruth, and the change enabled the long habits of self-restraint to regain something of their former ascendancy. The fountains of her tears became dry, and after one short and terrible struggle, she was again enabled to appear composed. But at no time during the continuance of that fearful struggle was Ruth Heathcote again the same ready and useful agent of activity and order that she had been in the earlier events of the night.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that the brief burst of parental agony which has just been related, escaped Content and his wife amid a scene in which the other actors were too much occupied by their exertions to note its exhibition. The fate of those in the block was too evidently approaching its close, to allow of any interest in such an episode to the great tragedy of the moment.

The character of the contest had in some measure changed. There was no longer any immediate apprehension from the missiles of the assailants, though danger pressed upon the besieged in a new and even in a more horrible aspect. Now and then indeed an arrow quivered in the openings of the loops, and the blunt Dudley had once a narrow escape from the passage of a bullet, which, guided by chance, or aimed by a hand surer than common, glanced through one of the narrow slits, and would have terminated the history of the borderer, had not the head it obliquely encountered, been too solid to yield even to such an assault. The attention of the gar-

risson was chiefly called to the imminent danger of the surrounding fire. Though the probability of such an emergency as that in which the family was now placed, had certainly been foreseen, and in some degree guarded against, in the size of the area and in the construction of the block, yet it was found that the danger exceeded all former calculations.

For the basement, there was no reason to feel alarm. It was of stone, and of a thickness and a material to put at defiance any artifice that their enemy might find time to practise. Even the two upper stories were comparatively safe; for they were composed of blocks so solid as to require time to heat them, and they were consequently as little liable to combustion as wood well could be. But the roof, like all of that, and indeed like most of the present day in America, was composed of short inflammable shingles of pine. The superior height of the tower was some little protection; but as the flames rose roaring above the buildings of the court, and waved in wide circuits around the heated area, the whole of the fragile covering of the block was often wrapped in folds of fire. The result may be anticipated. Content was first recalled from the bitterness of his parental regret, by a cry which passed among the family, that the roof of their little citadel was in flames. One of the ordinary wells of the habitation was in the basement of the edifice, and it was fortunate that no precaution necessary to render it serviceable in an emergency like that which was now arrived, had been neglected. A well-secured shaft of stone rose through the lower apartment into the upper floor. Profiting by this happy precaution, the handmaidens of Ruth plied the buckets with diligence, while the young men cast water freely on the roof, from the windows of the attic. The latter duty it may readily be supposed was not performed without hazard. Flights of arrows were constantly directed against the laborers, and more than one of the youths received greater or less injuries while exposed to their annoyance. There were indeed a few minutes during which it remained a question of grave interest how far the risk they ran was likely to be crowned with success. The excessive heat of so many fires, and the occasional contact with the flames, as they swept in eddies over the place, began to render it doubtful whether any human efforts could long arrest the evil. Even the massive and moistened logs of the body of the work began to smoke,

and it was found by experiment, that the hand could rest but a moment on their surface.

During this interval of deep suspense, all the men posted at the loops were called to aid in extinguishing the fire. Resistance was forgotten in the discharge of a duty that had become still more pressing. Ruth herself was aroused by the nature of the alarm, and all hands and all minds were arduously occupied in a toil that diverted attention from incidents which had less interest, because they were teeming less with instant destruction. Danger is known to lose its terrors by familiarity. The young borderers became reckless of their persons in the ardor of exertion, and as success began to crown their efforts, something like the levity of happier moments got the better of their concern. Stolen and curious glances were thrown around a place that had so long been kept sacred to the secret uses of the Puritan, when it was found that the flames were subdued, and that the present danger was averted. The light glared powerfully through several openings in the shingles no less than through the windows, and every eye was enabled to scan the contents of an apartment which all had longed, though none had ever before presumed to enter.

"The captain looketh well to the body," whispered Reuben Ring to one of his comrades, as he wiped the effects of the toil from a sunburnt brow. "Thou seest, Hiram, that there is good store of cheer."

"The buttery is not better stored!" returned the other, with the shrewdness and ready observation of a borderman. "It is known that he never toucheth that which the cow yields, except as it comes from the creature, and here we find of the best that the madam's dairy can yield!"

"Surely yon buff jerkin is like to those worn by the idle cavaliers at home! I think it be long since the captain hath ridden forth in such a guise."

"That may be matter of ancient usage, for thou seest he hath relics of the fashion of the English troopers in this bit of steel; it is like he holdeth deep exercise over the vanities of his youth, while recalling the times in which they were worn."

This conjecture appeared to satisfy the other, though it is probable that a sight of a fresh store of bodily aliment, which was soon after exposed, in order to gain access to the roof, might have led to some further inferences, had

more time been given to conjectures. But at this moment a new wail proceeded from the maidens who plied the buckets beneath.

"To the loops! to the loops, or we are lost!" was a summons that admitted of no delay. Led by the stranger, the young men rushed below, where, in truth, they found a serious demand on all their activity and courage.

The Indians were wanting in none of the sagacity which so remarkably distinguishes the warfare of this cunning race. The time spent by the family in arresting the flames had not been thrown away by the assailants. Profiting by the attention of those within, to efforts that were literally of the last importance, they had found means to convey burning brands to the door of the block, against which they had piled a mass of blazing combustibles, that threatened shortly to open the way into the basement of the citadel itself. In order to mask this design, and to protect their approaches, the savages had succeeded in dragging bundles of straw and other similar materials to the foot of the work, to which the fire soon communicated, and which consequently served both to increase the actual danger of the building and to distract the attention of those by whom it was defended. Although the water that fell from the roof served to retard the progress of these flames, it contributed to produce the effect of all others that was most desired by the savages. The dense volumes of smoke that arose from the half-smothered fire first apprised the females of the new danger which assailed them. When Content and the stranger reached the principal floor of their citadel, it required some little time and no small degree of coolness to comprehend the situation in which they were now placed. The vapor that rolled upward from the wet straw and hay had already penetrated into the apartment, and it was with no slight difficulty that they who occupied it were enabled to distinguish objects, or even to breathe.

"Here is matter to exercise our utmost fortitude," said the stranger to his constant companion. "We must look to this new device, or we come to the fate of death by fire. Summon the stoutest-hearted of thy youths, and I will lead them to a sortie, ere the evil get past a remedy."

"That were certain victory to the heathen. Thou hearest, by their yells, that 'tis no small band of scouts who beleaguér us; a tribe hath sent forth its chosen warriors to do their wickedness. Better is it that we bestir ourselves to drive them from our door, and to prevent the

further annoyance of this cloud, since, to issue from the block, at this moment, would be to offer our heads to the tomahawk ; and to ask mercy is as vain as to hope to move the rock with tears."

"And in what manner may we do this needful service?"

"Our muskets will still command the entrance, by means of these downward loops, and water may be yet applied through the same openings. Thought hath been had of this danger, in the disposition of the place."

"Then, of Heaven's mercy! delay not the effort."

The necessary measures were taken instantly. Eben Dudley applied the muzzle of his piece to a loop, and discharged it downwards, in the direction of the endangered door. But aim was impossible in the obscurity, and his want of success was proclaimed by a taunting shout of triumph. Then followed a flood of water, which, however, was scarcely of more service, since the savages had foreseen its use, and had made a provision against its effects by placing boards and such vessels as they found scattered among the buildings, above the fire, in a manner to prevent most of the fluid from reaching its aim.

"Come hither with thy musket, Reuben Ring," said Content, hurriedly ; "the wind stirreth the smoke here ; the savages will heap fuel against the wall."

The borderer complied. There were in fact moments when dark human forms were to be seen gliding in silence around the building, though the density of the vapor rendered the forms indistinct, and their movements doubtful. With a cool and practised eye the youth sought a victim ; but as he discharged his musket an object glanced near his own visage, as though the bullet had recoiled on him who had given it a very different mission. Stepping backwards a little hurriedly, he saw the stranger pointing through the smoke at an arrow, which still quivered in the floor above them.

"We cannot long abide these assaults," the soldier muttered ; "something must be speedily devised, or we fall."

His words ceased, for a yell that appeared to lift the floor on which he stood, announced the destruction of the door and the presence of the savages in the basement of the tower. Both parties appeared momentarily confounded at this unexpected success ; for while the one stood mute with astonishment and dread, the other did little more

than triumph. But this inaction soon ended. The conflict was resumed, though the efforts of the assailants began to assume the confidence of victory, while on the part of the besieged they partook fearfully of the aspect of despair.

A few muskets were discharged, both from below and above, at the intermediate floor, but the thickness of the planks prevented the bullets from doing injury. Then commenced a struggle, in which the respective qualities of the combatants were exhibited in a singularly characteristic manner. While the Indians improved their advantages beneath, with all the arts known to savage warfare, the young men resisted with that wonderful aptitude of expedient and readiness of execution which distinguish the American borderer.

The first attempt of the assailants was to burn the floor of the lower apartment. In order to effect this, they threw vast piles of straw into the basement. But ere the brand was applied, water had reduced the inflammable material to a black and murky pile. Still the smoke had nearly effected a conquest which the fire itself had failed to achieve. So suffocating indeed were the clouds of vapor which ascended through the crevices, that the females were compelled to seek a refuge in the attic. Here the openings in the roof, and a swift current of air, relieved them in some degree from its annoyance.

When it was found that the command of the well afforded the besieged the means of protecting the wood-work of the interior, an effort was made to cut off the communication with the water, by forcing a passage into the circular stone shaft, through which it was drawn into the room above. This attempt was defeated by the readiness of the youths, who soon cut holes in the floor, whence they sent down certain death on all beneath. Perhaps no part of the assault was more obstinate than that which accompanied this effort; nor did either assailant or assailed, at any time during its continuance, suffer greater personal injury. After a long and fierce struggle, the resistance was effectual, and the savages had recourse to new schemes in order to effect their ruthless object.

During the first moments of their entrance, and with a view to reap the fruits of the victory when the garrison should be more effectually subdued, most of the furniture of the dwelling had been scattered by the conquerors on the side of the hill. Among other articles, some six or

seven beds had been dragged from the dormitories. These were now brought into play as powerful instruments in the assault. They were cast, one by one, on the still burning though smothered flames in the basement of the block, whence they sent up a cloud of their intolerable effluvia. At this trying moment the appalling cry was heard in the block that the well had failed! The buckets ascended as empty as they went down, and they were thrown aside as no longer useful. The savages seemed to comprehend their advantage, for they profited by the confusion that succeeded among the assailed to feed the slumbering fires. The flames kindled fiercely, and in less than a minute they became too violent to be subdued. They were soon seen playing on the planks of the floor above. The subtle element flashed from point to point, and it was not long ere it was stealing up the outer side of the heated block itself.

The savages now knew that conquest was sure. Yells and whoopings proclaimed the fierce delight with which they witnessed the certainty of their victory. Still there was something portentous in the death-like silence with which the victims within the block awaited their fate. The whole exterior of the building was already wrapped in flames, and yet no show of further resistance, no petition for mercy, issued from its bosom. The unnatural and frightful stillness that reigned within was gradually communicated to those without. The cries and shouts of triumph ceased, and the crackling of the flames, or the falling of timber in the adjoining buildings, alone disturbed the awful calm. At length a solitary voice was heard in the block. Its tones were deep, solemn, and imploring. The fierce beings who surrounded the glowing pile bent forward to listen, for their quick faculties caught the first sounds that were audible. It was Mark Heathcote pouring out his spirit in prayer. The petition was fervent, but steady, and though uttered in words that were unintelligible to those without, they knew enough of the practices of the colonists to be aware that it was the chief of the pale-faces holding communion with his God. Partly in awe, and partly in doubt of what might be the consequence of so mysterious an asking, the dark crowd withdrew to a little distance, and silently watched the progress of the destruction. They had heard strange sayings of the power of the Deity of their invaders, and as their victims appeared suddenly to cease using any of the known means of safety, they appeared to expect, perhaps they did expect, some une-

quivocal manifestation of the power of the Great Spirit of the stranger.

Still no sign of pity, no relenting from the ruthless barbarity of their warfare, escaped any of the assailants. If they thought at all of the temporal fate of those who might still exist within the fiery pile, it was only to indulge in some passing regret that the obstinacy of the defence had deprived them of the glory of bearing the usual bloody tokens of victory in triumph to their villages. But even these peculiar and deeply-rooted feelings were forgotten, as the progress of the flames placed the hope of its indulgence beyond all possibility.

The roof of the block rekindled, and, by the light that shone through the loops, it was but too evident the interior was in a blaze. Once or twice smothered sounds came out of the place as if suppressed shrieks were escaping the females; but they ceased so suddenly as to leave doubts among the auditors whether it were more than the deception of their own excited fancies. The savages had witnessed many a similar scene of human suffering, but never one before in which death was met with so unmoved a calmness. The serenity that reigned in the blazing block communicated to them a feeling of awe; and when the pile came a tumbling and blackened mass of ruins to the earth, they avoided the place like men that dreaded the vengeance of a Deity who knew how to infuse so deep a sentiment of resignation into the breasts of his worshippers.

Though the yells of victory were again heard in the valley that night, and though the sun had arisen before the conquerors had deserted the hill, but few of the band found resolution to approach the smouldering pile where they had witnessed so impressive an exhibition of Christian fortitude. The few that did draw near stood around the spot rather in the reverence with which an Indian visits the graves of the just, than in the fierce rejoicings with which he is known to glut his revenge over a fallen enemy.

CHAPTER XVI.

“What are these,
So withered, and so wild in their attire ;
That look not like the inhabitants of earth,
And yet are on’t ?”—*Macbeth*.

THAT sternness of the season, which has already been mentioned in these pages, is never of long continuance in the month of April. A change in the wind had been noted by the hunters even before they retired from their range among the hills ; and though too seriously occupied to pay close attention to the progress of the thaw, more than one of the young men had found occasion to remark that the final breaking up of the winter had arrived. Long ere the scene of the preceding chapter reached its height, the southern winds had mingled with the heat of the conflagration. Warm airs, that had been following the course of the Gulf Stream, were driven to the land, and, sweeping over the narrow island that at this point forms the advanced work of the continent, but a few short hours had passed before they destroyed every chilling remnant of the dominion of winter. Warm, bland, and rushing in torrents, the subtle currents penetrated the forests, melted the snows from the fields, and as all alike felt the genial influence, it appeared to bestow a renovated existence on man and beast. With morning, therefore, a landscape very different from that last placed before the mind of the reader, presented itself in the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish.

The winter had entirely disappeared, and as the buds had begun to swell under the occasional warmth of the spring, one ignorant of the past would not have supposed that the advance of the season had been subject to so stern an interruption. But the principal and most melancholy change was in the more artificial parts of the view. Instead of those simple and happy habitations which had crowned the little eminence, there remained only a mass of blackened and charred ruins. A few abused and half-destroyed articles of household furniture lay scattered on the sides of the hill, and here and there a dozen palisadoes, favored by some accidental cause, had partially escaped the flames. Eight or ten massive and dreary-looking stacks of chimneys rose out of the smoking piles. In the centre of the desolation

was the stone basement of the block-house, on which still stood a few gloomy masses of the timber resembling coal. The naked and unsupported shaft of the well reared its circular pillar from the centre, looking like a dark monument of the past. The wide ruin of the out-buildings blackened one side of the clearing, and, in different places, the fences, like radii diverging from the common centre of destruction, had led off the flames into the fields. A few domestic animals ruminated in the background, and even the feathered inhabitants of the barns still kept aloof, as if warned by their instinct that danger lurked around the site of their ancient abodes. In all other respects the view was calm and lovely as ever. The sun shone from a sky in which no cloud was visible. The blandness of the winds, and the brightness of the heavens, lent an air of animation to even the leafless forest ; and the white vapor, that continued to rise from the smouldering piles, floated high over the hills, as the peaceful smoke of the cottage curled above its roof.

The ruthless band which had occasioned this sudden change was already far on the way to its villages, or haply it sought some other scene of blood. A skilful eye might have traced the route these fierce creatures of the woods had taken, by fences hurled from their places, or by the carcass of some animal that had fallen, in the wantonness of victory, beneath a parting blow. Of all these wild beings, one only remained ; and he appeared to linger at the spot in the indulgence of feelings that were foreign to those passions that had so recently stirred the bosoms of his comrades.

It was with a slow, noiseless step, that the solitary loiterer moved about the scene of destruction. He was first seen treading with a thoughtful air, among the ruins of the buildings that had formed the quadrangle, and then, seemingly led by an interest in the fate of those who had so miserably perished, he drew nearer to the pile in its centre. The nicest and most attentive ear could not have detected the fall of his foot, as the Indian placed it within the gloomy circle of the ruined wall ; nor is the breathing of the infant less audible, than the manner in which he drew breath, while standing in a place so lately consecrated by the agony and martyrdom of a Christian family. It was the boy called Miantonimoh, seeking some melancholy memorial of those with whom he had so long dwelt in amity, if not in confidence.

One skilled in the history of savage passions might have found a clew to the workings of the mind of the youth, in the play of his speaking features. As his dark glittering eye rolled over the smouldering fragments, it seemed to search keenly for some vestige of the human form. The element, however, had done its work too greedily, to have left many visible memorials of its fury. An object resembling that he sought, however, caught his glance, and stepping lightly to the spot where it lay, he raised the bone of a powerful arm from the brands. The flashing of his eye, as it lighted on this sad object, was wild and exulting, like that of the savage when he first feels the fierce joy of glutted vengeance; but gentler recollections came with the gaze, and tender feelings evidently usurped the place of the hatred he had been taught to bear a race who were so fast sweeping his people from the earth. The relic fell from his hand, and had Ruth been there to witness the melancholy and relenting shade that clouded his swarthy features, she might have found pleasure in the certainty that all her kindness had not been wasted.

Regret soon gave place to awe. To the imagination of the Indian, it seemed as if a still voice, like that which is believed to issue from the grave, was heard in the place. Bending his body forward, he listened with the intensity and acuteness of a savage. He thought the smothered tones of Mark Heathcote were again audible, holding communion with his God. The chisel of the Grecian would have loved to delineate the attitudes and movements of the wondering boy, as he slowly and reverently withdrew from the spot. His look was riveted on the vacancy where the upper apartments of the block had stood, and where he had last seen the family, calling in their extremity on their Deity for aid. Imagination still painted the victims in their burning pile. For a minute longer, during which brief space the young Indian probably expected to see some vision of the pale-faces, did he linger near; and then, with a musing air and softened mind, he trod lightly along the path which led on the trail of his people. When his active form reached the boundary of the forest, he again paused, and taking a final gaze at the place where fortune had made him a witness to so much domestic peace and to so much sudden misery, his form was quickly swallowed in the gloom of his native woods.

The work of the savages now seemed complete. An effectual check appeared to be placed to the further prog-

ress of civilization in the ill-fated valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish. Had nature been left to its own work, a few years would have covered the deserted clearing with its ancient vegetation ; and half a century would have again buried the whole of its quiet glades in the shadows of the forest. But it was otherwise decreed.

The sun had reached the meridian, and the hostile band had been gone some hours, before aught occurred likely to affect this seeming decision of Providence. To one acquainted with the recent horrors, the breathing of the airs over the ruins might have passed for the whisperings of departed spirits. In short, it appeared as if the silence of the wilderness had once more resumed its reign, when it was suddenly though slightly interrupted. A movement was made within the ruins of the block. It sounded as if billets of wood were gradually and cautiously displaced, and then a human head was reared slowly, and with marked suspicion, above the shaft of the well. The wild and unearthly air of this seeming spectre was in keeping with the rest of the scene. A face begrimed with smoke and stained with blood, a head bound in some fragment of a soiled dress, and eyes that were glaring in a species of dull horror, were objects in unison with all the other frightful accessories of the place.

"What seest thou?" demanded a deep voice from within the walls of the shaft. "Shall we again come to our weapons, or have the agents of Moloch departed? Speak, entranced youth! what dost behold?"

"A sight to make a wolf weep!" returned Eben Dudley, raising his large frame so as to stand erect on the shaft, where he commanded a bird's-eye-view of most of the desolation of the valley. "Evil though it may be, we may not say that forewarning signs have been withheld. But what is the cunningest man, when mortal wisdom is weighed in the scale against the craft of devils? Come forth! Belial hath done his worst, and we have a breathing-time."

The sounds which issued still deeper from the well denoted the satisfaction with which this intelligence was received, no less than the alacrity with which the summons of the borderer was obeyed. Sundry blocks of wood and short pieces of plank were first passed with care up to the hands of Dudley, who cast them like useless lumber among the other ruins of the building. He then descended from his perch, and made room for others to follow.

The stranger next arose After him came Content, the

Puritan, Reuben Ring, and, in short, all the youths, with the exception of those who had unhappily fallen in the contest. After these had mounted, and each in turn had leaped to the ground, a very brief preparation served for the liberation of the more feeble of the body. The readiness of border skill soon sufficed to arrange the necessary means. By the aid of chains and buckets, Ruth and the little Martha, Faith and all the handmaidens, without even one exception, were successfully drawn from the bowels of the earth, and restored to the light of day. It is scarcely necessary to say to those whom experience has best fitted to judge of such an achievement, that no great time or labor was necessary for its accomplishment.

It is not our intention to harass the feelings of the reader further than is required by a simple narrative of the incidents of the legend. We shall therefore say nothing of the bodily pain, or of the mental alarm, by which this ingenious retreat from the flames and the tomahawk had been effected. The suffering was chiefly confined to apprehension ; for as the descent was easy, so had the readiness and ingenuity of the young men found means, by the aid of articles of furniture first cast into the shaft, and by well-secured fragments of the floors properly placed across, both to render the situation of the females and children less painful than might at first be supposed, and effectually to protect them from the tumbling block. But little of the latter, however, was likely to affect their safety, as the form of the building was, in itself, a sufficient security against the fall of its heavier parts.

The meeting of the family amid the desolation of the valley, though relieved by the consciousness of having escaped a more shocking fate, may easily be imagined. The first act was to render brief but solemn thanks for their deliverance, and, then, with the promptitude of people trained in hardship, their attention was given to those measures which prudence told them were yet necessary.

A few of the more active and experienced of the youths were dispatched in order to ascertain the direction taken by the Indians, and to gain what intelligence they might concerning their future movements. The maidens hastened to collect the kine, while others searched with heavy hearts among the ruins, in quest of such articles of food and comfort as could be found, in order to administer to the first wants of nature.

Two hours had effected most of that which could imme-

diately be done in these several pursuits. The young men returned with the assurance that the trails announced the certain and final retreat of the savages. The cows had yielded their tribute, and such provision had been made against hunger as circumstances would allow. The arms had been examined and put, as far as the injuries they had received would admit, in readiness for instant service. A few hasty preparations had been made, in order to protect the females against the cool airs of the coming night; and, in short, all was done that the intelligence of a border-man could suggest, or his exceeding readiness in expedients could in so brief a space supply.

The sun began to fall toward the tops of the beeches that crowned the western outline of the view, before all these necessary arrangements were ended. It was not till then, however, that Reuben Ring, accompanied by another youth of equal activity and courage, appeared before the Puritan, equipped as well as men in their situation might be, for a journey through the forest.

"Go," said the old religionist, when the youths presented themselves before him—"Go; carry forth the tidings of this visitation, that men come to our succor. I ask not vengeance on the deluded and heathenish imitators of the worshippers of Moloch. They have ignorantly done this evil. Let no man arm in behalf of the wrongs of one sinful and erring. Rather let them look into the secret abominations of their own hearts, in order that they crush the living worm, which, by gnawing on the seeds of a healthful hope, may yet destroy the fruits of the promise in their own souls. I would that there be profit in this example of divine displeasure. Go—make the circuit of the settlements for some fifty miles, and bid such of the neighbors as may be spared, come to our aid. They shall be welcome; and may it be long ere any of them send invitation to me or mine to enter their clearings on the like melancholy duty. Depart, and bear in mind that you are messengers of peace; that your errand toucheth not the feelings of vengeance, but that it is succor in all fitting reason, and no arming of the hand to chase the savage to his retreats, that I ask of the brethren."

With this final admonition, the young men took their leaves. Still it was evident by their frowning brows, and compressed lips, that some part of its forgiving principle might be forgotten, should chance in their journey bring them on the trail of any wandering inhabitant of the forest.

In a few minutes they were seen passing with swift steps from the fields into the depths of the forest, along that path which led to the towns that lay lower on the Connecticut.

Another task still remained to be performed. In making the temporary arrangements for the shelter of the family, attention had been first paid to the block-house. The walls of the basement of this building were still standing, and it was found easy by means of half-burnt timbers, with an occasional board that had escaped the conflagration, to cover it in a manner that offered a temporary protection against the weather. This simple and hasty construction, with an extremely inartificial office erected around the stack of a chimney, embraced nearly all that could be done until time and assistance should enable them to commence other dwellings. In clearing the ruins of the little tower of its rubbish, the remains of those who had perished in the fray were piously collected. The body of the youth who had died in the earlier hours of the attack, was found but half consumed in the court, and the bones of two more who fell within the block, were collected from among the ruins. It had now become a melancholy duty to consign them all to the earth with decent solemnity.

The time selected for this sad office was just as the western horizon began to glow with that which one of our own poets has so beautifully termed, "the pomp that brings and shuts the day." The sun was in the tree-tops, and a softer or sweeter light could not have been chosen for such a ceremony. Most of the fields still lay in the soft brightness of the hour, though the forest was rapidly getting the more obscure look of night. A broad and gloomy margin was spreading from the boundary of the woods, and here and there a solitary tree cast its shadow on the meadows without its limits, throwing a dark ragged line in bold relief on the glow of the sun's rays. One—it was the dusky image of a high and waving pine, that reared its dark green pyramid of never-fading foliage nearly a hundred feet above the humbler growth of beeches—cast its shade to the side of the eminence of the block. Here the pointed extremity of the shadow was seen, stealing slowly toward the open grave,—an emblem of that oblivion in which its humble tenants were so shortly to be wrapped.

At this spot Mark Heathcote and his remaining companions had assembled. An oaken chair saved from the flames was the seat of the father, and two parallel benches

formed of planks placed on stones, held the other members of the family. The grave lay between. The patriarch had taken his station at one of its ends, while the stranger, so often named in these pages, stood with folded arms and a thoughtful brow at the other. The bridle of a horse caparisoned in that imperfect manner which the straitened means of the borderers now rendered necessary, was hanging from one of the half-burnt palisadoes, in the background.

"A just, but a merciful hand hath been laid heavily on my household," commenced the old Puritan, with the calmness of one who had long been accustomed to chasten his regrets by humility. "He that hath given freely, hath taken away, and One that hath long smiled upon my weakness, hath now veiled his face in anger. I have known him in his power to bless. It was meet that I should see him in his displeasure. A heart that was waxing confident, would have hardened in its pride. At that which hath befallen, let no man murmur. Let none imitate the speech of her who spoke foolishly: 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' I would that the feeble-minded of the world—they that jeopard the soul on vanities, they that look with scorn on the neediness of the flesh—might behold the riches of One steadfast. I would that they might know the consolation of the righteous! Let the voice of thanksgiving be heard in the wilderness. Open thy mouths in praise, that the gratitude of a penitent be not hid!"

As the deep tones of the speaker ceased, his stern eye fell upon the features of the nearest youth, and it seemed to demand an audible response to his own lofty expression of resignation. But the sacrifice exceeded the power of the individual to whom had been made this silent, but intelligible appeal. After regarding the relics that lay at his feet, casting a wandering glance at the desolation which had swept over a place his own hand had helped to decorate, and receiving a renewed consciousness of his own bodily suffering in the shooting pain of his wounds, the young borderer averted his look, and seemed to recoil from so officious a display of submission. Observing his inability to reply, Mark continued—

"Hath no one a voice to praise the Lord? The bands of the heathen have fallen upon my herds; the brand hath been kindled within my dwellings; my people have died by the violence of the unenlightened, and none are here to say

that the Lord is just ! I would that the shouts of thanksgiving should arise in my fields ! I would that the song of praise should grow louder than the whoop of the savage, and that all the land might speak joyfulness ! ”

A long, deep, and expecting pause succeeded. Then Content rejoined, in his quiet tones, speaking firmly, but with the modest utterance he rarely failed to use—

“The hand that hath held the balance is just,” he said, “and we have been found wanting. He that made the wilderness blossom, hath caused the ignorant and the barbarous to be the instruments of his will. He hath arrested the season of our prosperity, that we may know he is the Lord. He hath spoken in the whirlwind, but his mercy granteth that our ears shall know his voice.”

As his son ceased, a gleam of satisfaction shot across the countenance of the Puritan. His eye next turned inquiringly towards Ruth, who sat among her maidens the image of womanly sorrow. Common interest seemed to still the breathing of the little assemblage, and sympathy was quite as active as curiosity, when each one present suffered a glance to steal toward her benignant but pallid face. The eye of the mother was gazing earnestly, but without a tear, on the melancholy spectacle before her. It unconsciously sought among the dried and shrivelled remnants of mortality that lay at her feet, some relic of the cherub she had lost. A shudder and struggle followed, after which her gentle voice breathed so low that those nearest her person could scarce distinguish the words—

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be his holy name ! ”

“Now know I that he who hath smote me, is merciful ; for he chasteneth them he loveth,” said Mark Heathcote, rising with dignity to address his household. “Our life is a life of pride. The young are wont to wax insolent, while he of many years saith to his own heart, ‘it is good to be here.’ There is a fearful mystery in One who sitteth on high. The heavens are his throne, and he hath created the earth for his footstool. Let not the vanity of the weak of mind presume to understand it ; for ‘who that hath the breath of life, lived before the hills?’ The bonds of the evil one, of Satan, and of the sons of Belial, have been loosened, that the faith of the elect may be purified, that the names of those written since the foundation of the earth were laid, may be read in letters of pure gold. The time of man is but a moment in the reckoning of Him

whose life is eternity—earth the habitation of a season! The bones of the bold, of the youthful, and of the strong of yesterday, lie at our feet. None know what an hour may bring forth. In a single night, my children, hath this been done. They whose voices were heard in my halls, are now speechless, and they who so lately rejoiced, are sorrowing. Yet hath this seeming evil been ordered that good may come thereof. We are dwellers in a wild and distant land," he continued, insensibly permitting his thoughts to incline toward the more mournful details of their affliction. "Our earthly home is afar off. Hither have we been led by the flaming pillar of Truth, and yet the malice of the persecutors hath not forgotten to follow. One houseless, and sought like the hunted deer, is again driven to flee. We have the canopy of the stars for a roof. None may tarry longer to worship secretly within our walls. But the path of the faithful, though full of thorns, leadeth to quiet, and the final rest of the just man can never know alarm. He that hath borne hunger and thirst, and the pains of the flesh, for the sake of truth, knoweth how to be satisfied; nor will the hours of bodily suffering be accounted weary to him whose goal is the peace of the righteous." The strong lineaments of the stranger grew even more than usually austere, and as the Puritan continued, the hand which rested on the handle of a pistol, grasped the weapon until the fingers seemed imbedded in the wood. He bowed, however, as if to acknowledge the personal allusion, and remained silent.

"If any mourn the early death of those who have rendered up their being, struggling, as it may be permitted, in behalf of life and dwelling," continued Mark Heathcote, regarding a female near him, "let her remember, that from the beginning of the world were his days numbered, and that not a sparrow falleth without answering the ends of wisdom. Rather let the fulfilment of things remind us of the vanity of life, that we may learn how easy it is to become immortal. If the youth hath been cut down, seemingly like unripened grass, he hath fallen by the sickle of one who knoweth best when to begin the in-gathering of the harvest to his eternal garner. Though a spirit bound unto his, as one feeble is wont to lean on the strength of man and mourn over his fall, let her sorrow be mingled with rejoicing." A convulsive sob broke out of the bosom of the handmaiden who was known to have been affianced to one of the dead, and for a moment the address of Mark

was interrupted. But when silence again ensued, he continued, the subject leading him, by a transition that was natural, to allude to his own sorrows. "Death hath been no stranger in my habitation," he said. "His shaft fell heaviest when it struck her, who, like those that have here fallen, was in the pride of her youth, and when her soul was glad with the first joy of the birth of a man-child! Thou who sittest on high!" he added, turning a glazed and tearless eye to heaven; "thou knowest how heavy was that blow, and thou hast written down the strivings of an oppressed soul. The burden was not found too heavy for endurance. The sacrifice hath not sufficed; the world was again getting uppermost in my heart. Thou didst bestow an image of that innocence and loveliness that dwelleth in the skies, and this hast thou taken away, that we might know thy power. To this judgment we bow. If thou hast called our child to the mansions of bliss, she is wholly thine, and we presume not to complain; but if thou hast still left her to wander further in the pilgrimage of life, we confide in thy goodness. She is of a long-suffering race, and thou wilt not desert her to the blindness of the heathen. She is thine, she is wholly thine, King of Heaven! and yet hast thou permitted our hearts to yearn towards her, with the fondness of earthly love. We await some further manifestation of thy will, that we may know whether the fountains of our affection shall be dried in the certainty of her blessedness—" (scalding tears were rolling down the cheeks of the pallid and immovable mother) "or whether hope, nay, whether duty to thee calleth for the interference of those bound to her in the tenderness of the flesh. When the blow was heaviest on the bruised spirit of a lone and solitary wanderer, in a strange and savage land, he held not back the offspring it was thy will to grant him in the place of her called to thyself; and now that the child hath become a man, he too layeth, like Abraham of old, the infant of his love, a willing offering at thy feet. Do with it as to thy never-failing wisdom seemeth best." The words were interrupted by a heavy groan, that burst from the chest of Content. A deep silence ensued, but when the assembly ventured to throw looks of sympathy and awe at the bereaved father, they saw that he had arisen and stood gazing steadily at the speaker, as if he wondered, equally with the others, whence such a sound of suffering could have come. The Puritan renewed the subject, but his voice faltered, and for an instant, as he proceeded, his hearers

were oppressed with the spectacle of an aged and dignified man shaken with grief. Conscious of his weakness, the old man ceased speaking in exhortation, and addressed himself to prayer. While thus engaged, his tones again became clear, firm, and distinct, and the petition was ended in the midst of a deep and holy calm.

With the performance of this preliminary office, the simple ceremony was brought to its close. The remains were lowered, in solemn silence, into the grave, and the earth was soon replaced by the young men. Mark Heathcote then invoked aloud the blessing of God on his household, and bowing in person, as he had before done in spirit, to the will of Heaven, he motioned to the family to withdraw.

The interview that succeeded was over the resting-place of the dead. The hand of the stranger was firmly clenched in that of the Puritan, and the stern self-command of both appeared to give way, before the regrets of a friendship that had endured through so many trying scenes.

"Thou knowest that I may not tarry," said the former, as if he replied to some expressed wish of his companion. "They would make me a sacrifice to the Moloch of their vanities; and yet would I fain abide, until the weight of this heavy blow may be forgotten. I found thee in peace, and I quit thee in the depths of suffering!"

"Thou distrustest me, or thou dost injustice to thine own belief," interrupted the Puritan, with a smile, that shone on his haggard and austere visage, as the rays of the setting sun light a wintry cloud. "Seemed I happier when this hand placed that of a loved bride into mine own, than thou now seest me in this wilderness, houseless, stripped of my wealth, and, God forgive the ingratitude, but I had almost said, childless! No, indeed, thou mayest not tarry, for the blood-hounds of tyranny will be on their scent; here is shelter no longer."

The eyes of both turned, by a common and melancholy feeling, toward the ruin of the block. The stranger then pressed the hand of his friend in both his own, and said in a struggling voice—

"Mark Heathcote, adieu! He that hath a roof for the persecuted wanderer shall not long be houseless; neither shall the resigned forever know sorrow."

His words sounded in the ears of his companion like the revelation of a prophecy. They again pressed their hands together, and, regarding each other with looks in which

kindness could not be altogether smothered by the repulsive character of an acquired air, they parted. The Puritan slowly took his way to the dreary shelter which covered his family ; while the stranger was shortly after seen urging the beast he had mounted, across the pastures of the valley, toward one of the most retired paths of the wilderness.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Together towards the village then we walked,
And of old friends and places much we talked ;
And who had died, who left them, would he tell ;
And who still in their father’s mansion dwell.”—DANA.

WE leave the imagination of the reader to supply an interval of several years. Before the thread of the narrative shall be resumed, it will be necessary to take another hasty view of the condition of the country in which the scene of our legend had place.

The exertions of the provincials were no longer limited to the first efforts of a colonial existence. The establishments of New England had passed the ordeal of experiment, and were become permanent. Massachusetts was already populous ; and Connecticut, the colony with which we have more immediate connection, was sufficiently peopled to manifest a portion of that enterprise which has since made her active little community so remarkable. The effects of these increased exertions were becoming extensively visible ; and we shall endeavor to set one of these changes, as distinctly as our feeble powers will allow, before the eyes of those who read these pages.

When compared with the progress of society in the other hemisphere, the condition of what is called in America a new settlement, becomes anomalous. There, the arts of life have been the fruits of an intelligence that has progressively accumulated with the advancement of civilization ; while here, improvement is in a great degree the consequence of experience elsewhere acquired. Necessity, prompted by an understanding of its wants, incited by a commendable spirit of emulation, and encouraged by liberty, early gave birth to those improvements which have converted a wilderness into the abodes of abundance and security, with a rapidity that wears the appearance of

magic. Industry has wrought with the confidence of knowledge, and the result has been peculiar.

It is scarcely necessary to say that in a country where the laws favor all commendable enterprise, where unnecessary artificial restrictions are unknown, and where the hand of man has not yet exhausted its efforts, the adventurer is allowed the greatest freedom of choice in selecting the field of his enterprise. The agriculturist passes the heath and the barren, to seat himself on the river-bottom ; the trader looks for the site of demand and supply ; and the artisan quits his native village to seek employment in situations where labor will meet its fullest reward. It is a consequence of this extraordinary freedom of election, that, while the great picture of American society has been sketched with so much boldness, a large portion of the filling-up still remains to be done. The emigrant has consulted his immediate interests ; and, while no very extensive and profitable territory throughout the whole of our immense possessions has been wholly neglected, neither has any particular district yet attained the finish of improvement. The city is even now seen in the wilderness, and the wilderness often continues near the city, while the latter is sending forth its swarms to distant scenes of industry. After thirty years of fostering care on the part of the government, the Capital itself presents its disjointed and sickly villages in the centre of the deserted "old fields" of Maryland, while numberless youthful rivals are flourishing on the waters of the West, in spots where the bear has ranged and the wolf howled, long since the former has been termed a city.

Thus it is that high civilization, a state of infant existence, and positive barbarity, are often brought so near each other within the borders of this Republic. The traveller who has passed the night in an inn that would not disgrace the oldest country in Europe, may be compelled to dine in the shantee* of a hunter ; the smooth and gravelled road sometimes ends in an impassable swamp ; the spires of the town are often hid by the branches of a tangled forest, and

* *Shanty*, or *Shantee*, is a word much used in the newer settlements. It strictly means a rude cabin of bark and brush, such as is often erected in the forest for temporary purposes. But the borderers often quaintly apply it to their own habitations. The only derivation which the writer has heard for this American word, is one that supposes it to be a corruption of *Chiené*, a term said to be used among the Canadians to express a dog-kennel.

the canal leads to a seemingly barren and unprofitable mountain. He that does not return to see what another year may bring forth, commonly bears away from these scenes recollections that conduce to error. To see America with the eyes of truth, it is necessary to look often ; and in order to understand the actual condition of these States, it should be remembered that it is equally unjust to believe that all the intermediate points partake of the improvements of particular places, as to infer the want of civilization at more remote establishments, from a few unfavorable facts gleaned near the centre. By an accidental concurrence of moral and physical causes, much of that equality which distinguishes the institutions of the country is extended to the progress of society over its whole surface.

Although the impetus of improvement was not so great in the time of Mark Heathcote as in our own days, the principle of its power was actively in existence. Of this fact we shall furnish a sufficient evidence, by pursuing our intention of describing one of those changes to which allusion has already been made.

The reader will remember that the age of which we write had advanced into the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The precise moment at which the action of the tale must re-commence, was that period of the day when the gray of twilight was redeeming objects from the deep darkness with which the night draws to its close. The month was June, and the scene such as it may be necessary to describe with some particularity.

Had there been light, and had one been favorably placed to enjoy a bird's-eye view of the spot, he would have seen a broad and undulating field of leafy forest, in which the various deciduous trees of New England were relieved by the deeper verdure of occasional masses of evergreen. In the centre of this swelling and nearly interminable outline of woods, was a valley that spread between three low mountains. Over the bottom land, for the distance of several miles, all the signs of a settlement in a state of rapid and prosperous improvement were visible. The devious course of a deep and swift brook, that in the other hemisphere would have been termed a river, was to be traced through the meadows by its borders of willow and sumach. At a point near the centre of the valley the waters had been arrested by a small dam ; and a mill, whose wheel at that early hour was without motion, stood

on the artificial mound. Near it was the site of a New England hamlet.

The number of dwellings in the village might have been forty. They were, as usual, constructed of a firm framework, neatly covered with sidings of boards. There was a surprising air of equality in the general aspect of the houses; and, if there were question of any country but our own, it might be added there was an unusual appearance of comfort and abundance in even the humblest of them all. They were mostly of two low stories, the superior overhanging the inferior by a foot or two; a mode of construction much in use in the earlier days of the eastern colonies. As paint was but little used at that time, none of the buildings exhibited a color different from that the wood would naturally assume after the exposure of a few years to the weather. Each had its single chimney in the centre of the roof, and but two or three showed more than a solitary window on each side of the principal or outer door. In front of every dwelling was a small, neat court, in greensward, separated from the public road by a light fence of deal. Double rows of young and vigorous elms lined each side of the wide street, while an enormous sycamore still kept possession of the spot in its centre which it had occupied when the white man entered the forest. Beneath the shade of this tree the inhabitants often collected to gather tidings of each other's welfare, or to listen to some matter of interest that rumor had borne from the towns nearer the sea. A narrow and little-used wheel track ran with a graceful and sinuous route through the centre of the wide and grassy street. Reduced in appearance to little more than a bridle-path, it was to be traced without the hamlet, between high fences of wood for a mile or two, to the points where it entered the forest. Here and there roses were pressing through the openings of the fences before the doors of the different habitations, and bushes of fragrant lilacs stood in the angles of most of the courts.

The dwellings were detached. Each occupied its own insulated plot of ground, with a garden in its rear. The out-buildings were thrown to that distance which the cheapness of land and security from fire rendered both easy and expedient.

The church stood in the centre of the highway, and near one end of the hamlet. In the exterior and ornaments of the important temple, the taste of the times had been

fastidiously consulted, its form and simplicity furnishing no slight resemblance to the self-denying doctrines and quaint humors of the religionists who worshipped beneath its roof. The building, like all the rest, was of wood, and externally of two stories. It possessed a tower, without a spire—the former alone serving to denote its sacred character. In the construction of this edifice, especial care had been taken to eschew all deviations from direct lines and right angles. Those narrow-arched passages for the admission of light that are elsewhere so common, were then thought by the stern moralists of New England to have some mysterious connection with her of the scarlet mantle. The priest would as soon have thought of appearing before his flock in the vanities of stole and cassock, as the congregation of admitting the repudiated ornaments into the outline of their severe architecture. Had the Genii of the Lamp suddenly exchanged the windows of the sacred edifice with those of the inn that stood nearly opposite, the closest critic of the settlement could never have detected the liberty, since, in the form, dimensions, and style of the two, there was no visible difference.

A little enclosure at no great distance from the church, and on one side of the street, had been set apart for the final resting-place of those who had finished their race on earth. It contained but a solitary grave.

The inn was to be distinguished from the surrounding buildings, by its superior size, an open horse-shed, and a sort of protruding air with which it thrust itself on the line of the street, as if to invite the traveller to enter. A sign swung on a gallows-looking post, that, in consequence of frosty nights and warm days, had already deviated from the perpendicular. It bore a conceit that at the first glance might have gladdened the heart of a naturalist with the belief that he had made the discovery of some unknown bird. The artist, however, had sufficiently provided against the consequences of so embarrassing a blunder, by considerably writing beneath the offspring of his pencil, "This is the sign of the Whip-Poor-Will;" a name, that the most unlettered traveller in those regions would be likely to know was vulgarly given to the Wish-Ton-Wish, or the American night-hawk.

But few relics of the forest remained immediately around the hamlet. The trees had long been felled, and sufficient time had elapsed to remove most of the vestiges of their former existence. But as the eye receded from the clus-

ter of buildings, the signs of more recent inroads on the wilderness became apparent, until the view terminated with openings, in which piled logs and mazes of felled trees announced the recent use of the axe.

At that early day, the American husbandman, like the agriculturists of most of Europe, dwelt in his village. The dread of violence from the savages had given rise to a custom similar to that which centuries before had been produced in the other hemisphere by the inroads of more pretending barbarians, and which, with few and distant exceptions, has deprived rural scenery of a charm that, it would seem, time and a better condition of society are slow to repair. Some remains of this ancient practice are still to be traced in the portion of the Union of which we write, where even at this day the farmer often quits the village to seek his scattered fields in his neighborhood. Still, as man has never been the subject of a system here, and as each individual has always had the liberty of consulting his own temper, bolder spirits early began to break through a practice, by which quite as much was lost in convenience as was gained in security. Even in the scene we have been describing, ten or twelve humble habitations were distributed among the recent clearings on the side of the mountains, and in situations too remote to promise much security against any sudden inroad of the common enemy.

For general protection, in cases of the last extremity, however, a stockaded dwelling, not unlike that which we have had occasion to describe in our earlier pages, stood in a convenient spot near the hamlet. Its defences were stronger and more elaborate than usual, the pickets being furnished with flanking block-houses; and, in other respects, the building bore the aspect of a work equal to any resistance that might be required in the warfare of those regions. The ordinary habitation of the priest was within its gates; and hither most of the sick were timely conveyed, in order to anticipate the necessity of removals at more inconvenient moments.

It is scarcely necessary to tell the American, that heavy wooden fences subdivided the whole of this little landscape into enclosures of some eight or ten acres in extent; that, here and there, cattle and flocks were grazing without herdsmen or shepherds, and that while the fields nearest to the dwellings were beginning to assume the appearance of a careful and improved husbandry, those more remote became gradually wilder and less cultivated, until

the half-reclaimed openings, with their blackened stubs and barked trees, were blended with the gloom of the living forest. These are more or less the accompaniments of every rural scene in districts of the country where time has not yet effected more than the first two stages of improvement.

At the distance of a short half-mile from the fortified house, or garrison, as by a singular corruption of terms the stockaded building was called, stood a dwelling of pretensions altogether superior to any in the hamlet. The buildings in question, though simple, were extensive ; and though scarcely other than such as might belong to an agriculturist in easy circumstances, still they were remarkable in that settlement, by the comforts which time alone could accumulate, and some of which denoted an advanced condition for a frontier family. In short, there was an air about the establishment, as in the disposition of its out-buildings, in the superior workmanship, and in the materials, and in numberless other well-known circumstances, which went to show that the whole of the edifices were reconstructions. The fields near this habitation exhibited smoother surfaces than those in the distance. The fences were lighter and less rude ; the stumps had absolutely disappeared ; and the gardens and homestead were well planted with flourishing fruit-trees. A conical eminence arose at a short distance in the rear of the principal dwelling. It was covered with that beautiful and peculiar ornament of an American farm, a regular, thrifty, and luxuriant apple-orchard. Still, age had not given its full beauty to the plantation, which might have had a growth of some eight or ten years. A blackened tower of stone, which sustained the charred ruins of a superstructure of wood, though of no great height in itself, rose above the tallest of the trees, and stood a sufficient memorial of some scene of violence in the brief history of the valley. There was also a small block-house near the habitation ; but, by the air of neglect that reigned around, it was quite apparent the little work had been of a hurried construction, and of but temporary use. A few young plantations of fruit-trees were also to be seen in different parts of the valley, which was beginning to exhibit many other evidences of an improved agriculture.

So far as all these artificial changes went, they were of an English character. But it was England devoid alike of its luxury and its poverty, and with a superfluity of space

that gave to the meanest habitation in the view, an air of abundance and comfort that is so often wanting about the dwellings of the comparatively rich, in countries where man is found bearing a far greater numerical proportion to the soil than was then, or is even now the case, in the regions of which we write.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Come hither, neighbor Sea-coal—God hath blessed you with a good name; to be a well-favored man is the gift of fortune; but to write and read comes by Nature.”—*Much Ado about Nothing*.

It has already been said, that the hour at which the action of the tale must re-commence, was early morning. The usual coolness of night, in a country extensively covered with wood, had passed, and the warmth of a summer morning, in that low latitude, was causing the streaks of light vapor, that floated about the meadows, to rise above the trees. The feathery patches united to form a cloud that sailed away toward the summit of a distant mountain, which appeared to be a common rendezvous for all the mists that had been generated by the past hours of darkness.

Though the burnished sky announced his near approach, the sun was not yet visible. Notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, a man was already mounting a little ascent in the road, at no great distance from the southern entrance of the hamlet, and at a point where he could command a view of all the objects described in the preceding chapter. A musket thrown across his left shoulder, with the horn and pouch at his sides, together with the little wallet at his back, proclaimed him one who had either been engaged in a hunt, or in some short expedition of even a less peaceable character. His dress was of the usual material and fashion of a countryman of the age and colony, though a short broadsword, that was thrust through a wampum belt which girded his body, might have attracted observation. In all other respects, he had the air of an inhabitant of the hamlet, who had found occasion to quit his abode on some affair of pleasure or of duty, that had made no very serious demand on his time.

Whether native or stranger, few ever passed the hillock

named, without pausing to gaze at the quiet loveliness of the cluster of houses that lay in full view from its summit. The individual mentioned loitered as usual, but, instead of following the line of the path, his eye rather sought some object in the direction of the fields. Moving leisurely to the nearest fence, he threw down the upper rails of a pair of bars, and beckoned to a horseman, who was picking his way across a broken bit of pasture land, to enter the highway by the passage he had opened.

"Put the spur smartly into the pacer's flank," said he who had done this act of civility, observing that the other hesitated to urge his beast across the irregular and somewhat scattered pile; "my word for it, the jade goes over them all, without touching with more than three of her four feet. Fie, doctor! there is never a cow in the Wish-Ton-Wish, but it would take the leap to be in the first at the milking."

"Softly, ensign," returned the timid equestrian, laying the emphasis on the final syllable of his companion's title, and pronouncing the first as if it were spelt with the third instead of the second vowel. "Thy courage is meet for one set apart for deeds of valor, but it would be a sorrowful day when the ailing of the valley should knock at my door, and a broken limb be made the apology for want of succor. Thy efforts will not avail thee, man; for the mare hath had schooling, as well as her master. I have trained the beast to methodical habits, and she hath come to have a rooted dislike to all irregularities of movement. So, cease tugging at the rein, as if thou wouldst compel her to pass the pile in spite of her teeth, and throw down the upper bar altogether."

"A doctor in these rugged parts should be mounted on one of those ambling birds of which we read," said the other, removing the obstacle to the secure passage of his friend; "for truly a journey at night, in the paths of these clearings, is not always as safe moving as that which is said to be enjoyed by the settlers nearer sea."

"And where hast found mention of a bird of a size and velocity fit to be the bearer of the weight of a man?" demanded he who was mounted, with a vivacity that betrayed some jealousy on the subject of a monopoly of learning. "I had thought there was never a book in the valley, out of mine own closet, that dealeth in these abstrusities!"

"Dost think the Scriptures are strangers to us? There—

thou art now in the public path, and thy journey is without danger. It is matter of marvel to many in this settlement, how thou movest about at midnight, among upturned roots of trees, holes, logs and stumps, without falling——”

“I have told thee, ensign, it is by virtue of much training given to the beast. Certain am I, that neither whip nor spur would compel the animal to pass the bounds of discretion. Often have I travelled this bridle-path, without fear as in truth without danger, when sight was a sense of as little use as that of smelling.”

“I was about to say falling into thine own hands, which would be a tumble of little less jeopardy than even that of the wicked spirits.”

The medical man affected to laugh at his companion's joke; but, remembering the dignity suited to one of his calling, he immediately resumed the discourse with gravity—

“These may be matters of levity with those who know little of the hardships that are endured in the practice of the settlements. Here have I been on yonder mountain, guided by the instinct of my horse——”

“Ha! hath there been a call at the dwelling of my brother Ring?” demanded the pedestrian, observing, by the direction of the other's eye, the road he had been travelling.

“Truly, there hath; and at the unseasonable hour that is wont in a very unreasonable proportion of the cases of my practice.”

“And Reuben numbereth another boy to the four that he could count yesterday?”

The medical man held up three of his fingers, in a significant manner, as he nodded assent.

“This putteth Faith something in arrears,” returned he who has been called ensign, and who was no other than the reader's old acquaintance Eben Dudley, preferred to that station in the train-band of the valley. “The heart of my brother Reuben will be gladdened by these tidings when he shall return from the scout.”

“There will be occasion for thankfulness, since he will find seven beneath a roof where he left but four!”

“I will close the bargain with the young captain for the mountain lot this very day!” muttered Dudley, like one suddenly convinced of the prudence of a long-debated measure. “Seven pounds of the colony money is no

usurer's price, after all, for a hundred acres of heavily-timbered land ; and they in full view of a settlement where boys come three at a time ! ”

The equestrian stopped his horse, and regarding his companion intently and with a significant air, he answered—

“Thou hast now fallen on the clew of an important mystery, Ensign Dudley. This continent was created with a design. The fact is apparent by its riches, its climate, its magnitude, its facilities of navigation, and chiefly in that it hath been left undiscovered until the advanced condition of society hath given opportunity and encouragement to men of a certain degree of merit to adventure in its behalf. Consider, neighbor, the wonderful progress it hath already made in the arts and in learning, in reputation and in resources, and thou wilt agree with me in the conclusion that all this hath been done with a design.”

“’Twould be presuming to doubt it ; for he hath indeed a short memory to whom it shall be necessary to recall the time when this very valley was little other than a den for beasts of prey, and this beaten highway a deer-track. Dost think that Reuben will be like to raise the whole of the recent gift ? ”

“With judgment, and by the blessing of Providence. The mind is active, Ensign Dudley, when the body is journeying among the forests ; and much have my thoughts been exercised in this matter, while thou and others have been in your slumbers. Here have we the colonies in their first century, and yet thou knowest to what a pass of improvement they have arrived. They tell me the Hartford settlement is getting to be apportioned like the towns of mother England, that there is reason to think the day may come when the provinces shall have a power, and a convenience of culture and communication, equaling that which belongeth to some parts of the venerable island itself ! ”

“Nay, nay, Doctor Ergot,” returned the other with an incredulous smile, “that is exceeding the bounds of a discretionable expectation.”

“Thou wilt remember that I said equalling to *certain* parts. I think we may justly imagine, that ere many centuries shall elapse, there may be millions counted in these regions, and truly that, too, where one seeth naught at present but the savage and the beast.”

“I will go with any man, in this question, as far as

reason will justify ; but doubtless thou hast read in the books uttered by writers over sea, the matters concerning the condition of those countries, wherein it is plain that we may never hope to reach the exalted excellence they enjoy."

"Neighbor Dudley, thou seemest disposed to push an unguarded expression to extremity. I said equalling *certain* parts, meaning always, too, in certain things. Now it is known in philosophy, that the stature of man hath degenerated, and must degenerate in these regions, in obedience to established laws of nature ; therefore it is meet that allowance should be made for some deficiency in less material qualities."

"It is like, then, that the better sort of the men over sea are ill-disposed to quit their country," returned the ensign, glancing an eye of some unbelief along the muscular proportions of his own vigorous frame. "We have no less than three from the old countries in our village, here, and yet I do not find them men like to have been sought for at the building of Babel."

"This is settling a knotty and learned point by the evidence of a few shallow exceptions. I presume to tell you, Ensign Dudley, that the science, and wisdom, and philosophy of Europe, have been exceeding active in this matter ; and they have proved to their own perfect satisfaction, which is the same thing as disposing of the question without appeal, that man and beast, plant and tree, hill and dale, lake and pond, sun, air, fire and water, are all wanting in some of the perfectness of the older regions. I respect a patriotic sentiment, and can carry the disposition to applaud the bounties received from the hands of a beneficent Creator as far as any man ; but that which hath been demonstrated by science, or collected by learning, is placed too far beyond the objections of light-minded cavillers, to be doubted by graver faculties."

"I shall not contend against things that are proven," returned Dudley, who was quite as meek in discussion as he was powerful and active in more physical contests ; "since it needs be that the learning of men in the old countries must have an exceeding excellence, in virtue of its great age. It would be a visit to remember, should some of its rare advantages be dispersed in these our own youthful regions !"

"And can it be said that our mental wants have been forgotten—that the nakedness of the mind hath been suf-

ferred to go without its comely vestment, neighbor Dudley ? To me it seemeth that therein we have unwonted reason to rejoice, and that the equilibrium of nature is in a manner restored by the healing exercises of art. It is unseemly in an unenlightened province to insist on qualities that have been discreetly disproven ; but learning is a transferable and communicable gift, and it is meet to affirm that it is to be found here, in quantities adapted to the wants of the colony."

"I'll not gainsay it, for having been more of an adventurer in the forest than one who hath travelled in quest of sights among the settlements along the sea-shore, it may happen that many things are to be seen there, of which my poor abilities have formed no opinion."

"And are we utterly unenlightened, even in this distant valley, ensign?" returned the leech, leaning over the neck of his horse, and addressing his companion in a mild and persuasive tone, that he had probably acquired in his extensive practice among the females of the settlement. "Are we to be classed with the heathen in knowledge, or to be accounted as the unnurtured men who are known once to have roamed through these forests in quest of their game? Without assuming any infallibility of judgment, or aspiring to any peculiarity of information, it doth not appear to my defective understanding, Master Dudley, that the progress of the settlement hath ever been checked for want of necessary foresight, nor that the growth of reason among us hath ever been stunted from any lack of mental aliment. Our councils are not barren of wisdom, ensign, nor hath it often arrived that abstrusities have been propounded, that some one intellect, to say no more in our own favor, hath not been known to grapple with successfully."

"That there are men, or perhaps I ought to say that there *is a man*, in the valley, who is equal to many marvels in the way of enlightened gifts——"

"I knew we should come to peaceable conclusions, Ensign Dudley," interrupted the other, rising erect in his saddle, with an air of appeased dignity ; "for I have ever found you a discreet and consequent reasoner, and one who is never known to resist conviction, when truth is pressed with understanding. That the men from over sea are not often so well gifted as some—we will say, for the sake of a convenient illustration, as thyself, ensign—is placed beyond the reach of debate, since sight teacheth us that number.

less exceptions may be found to all the more general and distinctive laws of nature. I think we are not likely to carry our disagreement further?"

"It is impossible to make head against one so ready with his knowledge," returned the other, well content to exist in his own person a striking exception to the inferiority of his fellows; "though it appeareth to me that my brother Ring might be chosen, as another instance of a reasonable stature; a fact that thou mayest see, doctor, by regarding him as he approaches through yon meadow. He hath been, like myself, on the scout among the mountains."

"There are many instances of physical merit among thy connections, Master Dudley," returned the complaisant physician; "though it would seem that thy brother hath not found his companion among them. He is attended by an ill-grown, and, it may be added, an ill-favored comrade, that I know not."

"Ha! It would seem that Reuben hath fallen on the trail of savages! The man in company is certainly in paint and blanket. It may be well to pause at yonder opening, and await their coming."

As this proposition imposed no particular inconvenience, the doctor readily assented. The two drew nigh to the place where the men, whom they saw crossing the fields in the distance, were expected to enter the highway.

But little time was lost in attendance. Ere many minutes had elapsed, Reuben Ring, accoutred and armed like the borderer already introduced in this chapter, arrived at the opening, followed by the stranger whose appearance had caused so much surprise to those who watched their approach.

"What now, sergeant," exclaimed Dudley, when the other was within ear-shot, speaking a little in the manner of one who had a legal right to propound his questions; "hast fallen on a trail of the savage, and made a captive? or hath some owl permitted one of its brood to fall from the nest across thy footpath?"

"I believe the creature may be accounted a man," returned the successful Reuben, throwing the breech of his gun to the earth, and leaning on its long barrel, while he intently regarded the half-painted, vacant, and extremely equivocal countenance of his captive. "He hath the colors of a Narragansett about the brow and eyes, and yet he faileth greatly in the form and movements."

"There are anomalies in the physicals of an Indian, as

in those of other men," interrupted Doctor Ergot, with a meaning glance at Dudley. "The conclusion of our neighbor Ring may be too hasty, since paint is the fruit of art, and may be applied to any of our faces, after an established usage. But the evidences of nature are far less to be distrusted. It hath come within the province of my studies to note the differences in formation, which occur in the different families of man; and nothing is more readily to be known to an eye skilled in these abstrusities than the aboriginal of the tribe Narragansett. Set the man more in a position of examination, neighbors, and it shall shortly be seen to which race he belongs. Thou wilt note in this little facility of investigation, ensign, a clear evidence of most of the matters that have this morning been agitated between us. Doth the patient speak English?"

"Therein have I found some difficulty of inquiry," returned Reuben, or as he should now be, and as he was usually called, Sergeant Ring. "He hath been spoken to in the language of a Christian, no less than in that of a heathen, and as yet no reply hath been made, while he obeys commands uttered in both forms of speech."

"It mattereth not," said Ergot, dismounting, and drawing near to his subject, with a look toward Dudley that should seem to court his admiration.

"Happily the examination before me leaneth but little on any subtleties of speech. Let the man be placed in an attitude of ease, one in which nature may not be fettered by restraint. The conformation of the whole head is remarkably aboriginal, but the distinction of tribes is not to be sought in these general delineations. The forehead, as you see, neighbors, is retreating and narrow, the cheek-bones as usual high, and the olfactory member, as in all of the natives, inclining to Roman."

"Now to me it would seem that the nose of the man hath a marked upturning at the end," Dudley ventured to remark, as the other ran volubly over the general and well-known distinctive points of physical construction in an Indian.

"As an exception! Thou seest, ensign, by this elevation of the bone, and the protuberance of the more fleshy parts, that the peculiarity is an exception. I should rather have said that the nose originally inclined to the Roman. The departure from regularity has been produced by some casualty of their warfare, such as a blow from a tomahawk, or the gash of a knife—aye! here thou seest the scar left by

the weapon ! It is concealed by the paint ; but remove that, and you will find that it hath all the form of a cicatrix of a corresponding shape. These departures from generalities have a tendency to confound pretenders ; a happy circumstance in itself for the progress of knowledge on fixed principles. Place the subject more erect, that we may see the natural movement of the muscles. Here is an evidence of great aquatic habits in the dimensions of the foot, which go to confirm original conceptions. It is a happy proof, through which reasonable and prudent conclusions confirm the quick-sighted glances of practice. I pronounce the fellow to be a Narragansett."

"Is it then a Narragansett that hath a foot to confound a trail ?" returned Eben Dudley, who had been studying the movements and attitudes of the captive with quite as much keenness, and with something more of understanding than the leech. "Brother Ring, hast ever known an Indian leave such an out-turning foot-print on the leaves ?"

"Ensign, I marvel that a man of thy discretion should dwell on a slight variety of movement, when a case exists in which the laws of nature may be traced to their sources. This training for the Indian troubles hath made thee critical in the position of a foot. I have said that the fellow is a Narragansett, and what I have uttered hath not been lightly ventured. Here is the peculiar formation of the foot, which hath been obtained in infancy, a fulness in the muscles of the breast and shoulders, from unusual exercise in an element denser than the air, and a nicer construction in——"

The physician paused, for Dudley had coolly advanced to the captive, and raising the thin robe of deer-skin which was thrown over the whole of his superior members, he exposed the unequivocal skin of a white man. This would have proved an embarrassing refutation to one accustomed to the conflict of wits ; but monopoly in certain branches of knowledge had produced in favor of Doctor Ergot an acknowledged superiority, that in its effects might be likened to the predominating influence of any other aristocracy on those faculties that have been benumbed by its operation. His opinion changed, which is more than can be said of his countenance ; for with the readiness of invention which is so often practised in the felicitous institutions we have named, and by which the reasoning, instead of regulating, is adapted to the practice, he exclaimed

with uplifted hands and eyes that bespoke the fulness of his admiration—

“Here have we another proof of the wonderful agency by which the changes in nature are gradually wrought! Now do we see in this Narragansett——”

“The man is white!” interrupted Dudley, tapping the naked shoulder, which he still held exposed to view.

“White, but not a tittle the less a Narragansett. Your captive, beyond a doubt, oweth his existence to Christian parentage, but accident hath thrown him early among the aboriginals, and all those parts which were liable to change, were fast getting to assume the peculiarities of the tribe. He is one of those beautiful and connecting links in the chain of knowledge, by which science followeth up its deductions to demonstration.”

“I should ill brook coming to harm for doing violence to a subject of the king,” said Reuben Ring, a steady, open-faced yeoman, who thought far less of the subtleties of his companion than of discharging his social duties in a manner fitting the character of a quiet and well-conditioned citizen. “We have had so much of stirring tidings latterly, concerning the manner the savages conduct their warfare, that it behoveth men in places of trust to be vigilant; for,” glancing his eyes toward the ruin of the distant block-house, “thou knowest, brother Dudley, that we have occasion to be watchful in a settlement as deep in the forest as this.”

“I will answer for the indemnity, Sergeant Ring,” said Dudley, with an air of dignity. “I take upon myself the keeping of this stranger, and will see that he be borne, properly, and in fitting season, before the authorities. In the meantime, duty hath caused us to overlook matters of moment in thy household, which it may be seemly to communicate. Abundance hath not been neglectful of thy interests, during the scout.”

“What!” demanded the husband, with rather more of earnestness than was generally exhibited by one of habits as restrained as his own; “hath the woman called upon the neighbors during my absence?”

Dudley nodded an assent.

“And shall I find another boy beneath my roof?”

Doctor Ergot nodded three times, with a gravity that might have suited a communication even more weighty than the one he made.

“Thy woman rarely doth a good turn by halves, Reu-

ben. Thou wilt find that she hath made provision for a successor to our good neighbor Ergot, since a seventh son is born in thy house."

The broad, honest face of the father flushed with joy, and then a feeling less selfish came over him. He asked, with a slight tremor in the voice, that was none the less touching for coming from the lips of one so stout of frame and firm of movement—

"And the woman?—in what manner doth Abundance bear up under the blessing?"

"Bravely," returned the leech; "go to thy dwelling, Sergeant Ring, and praise God that there is one to look to its concerns in thy absence. He who hath received the gift of seven sons in five years, need never be a poor nor a dependent man in a country like this. Seven farms, added to that pretty homestead of mountain-land which thou now tillest, will render thee a patriarch in thine age, and sustain the name of Ring, hundreds of years hence, when these colonies shall become peopled and powerful, and, I say it boldly, caring not who may call me one that vaunteth out of reason, equal to some of your lofty and self-extolled kingdoms of Europe—aye, even peradventure to the mighty sovereignty of Portugal itself! I have enumerated thy future farms at seven, for the allusion of the ensign to the virtues of men born with natural propensities to the healing art, must be taken as a pleasant speech, since it is mere delusion of old wives' fancy, and it would be particularly unnecessary here, where every reasonable situation of this nature is already occupied. Go to thy wife, sergeant, and bid her be of good cheer; for she hath done herself, thee, and thy country, a service, and that without dabbling in pursuits foreign to her comprehension."

The sturdy yeoman, on whom this rich gift of Providence had been dispensed, raised his hat, and placing it decently before his face, he offered up a silent thanksgiving for the favor. Then transferring his captive to the keeping of his superior and kinsman, he was soon seen striding over the fields toward his upland dwelling, with a heavy foot, though with a light heart.

In the meantime, Dudley and his companion bestowed a more particular attention on the silent and nearly motionless object of their curiosity. Though the captive appeared to be of middle age, his eye was unmeaning, his air timid and uncertain, and his form cringing and ungainly.

In all these particulars, he was seen to differ from the known peculiarities of a native warrior.

Previously to departing, Reuben Ring had explained that while traversing the woods, on that duty of watchfulness to which the state of the colony and some recent signs had given rise, this wandering person had been encountered and secured, as seemed necessary to the safety of the settlement. He had neither sought nor avoided his captor ; but when questioned concerning his tribe, his motive for traversing those hills, and his future intentions, no satisfactory reply could be extracted. He had scarcely spoken, and the little that he said was uttered in a jargon between the language of his interrogator and the dialect of some barbarous nation. Though there was much in the actual state of the colonies, and in the circumstances in which this wanderer had been found, to justify his detention, little had in truth been discovered, to supply a clew either to any material facts in his history, or to any of his views in being in the immediate vicinity of the valley.

Guided only by this barren information, Dudley and his companion endeavored, as they moved toward the hamlet, to entrap their prisoner into some confession of his object, by putting their questions with a sagacity not unusual to men in remote and difficult situations, where necessity and danger are apt to keep alive all the native energies of the human mind. The answers were little connected and unintelligible, sometimes seeming to exhibit the finest subtlety of savage cunning, and at others appearing to possess the mental helplessness of the most abject fatuity.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are ;—

But I have
That honorable grief lodged here, which burns
Worse than tears drown.”—*Winter's Tale*.

If the pen of a compiler, like that we wield, possessed the mechanical power of the stage, it would be easy to shift the scenes of this legend as rapidly and effectively as is required for its right understanding, and for the proper maintenance of its interest. That which cannot be done with the magical aid of machinery, must be attempted by less ambitious, and we fear by far less efficacious means.

At the same early hour of the day, and at no great distance from the spot where Dudley announced his good fortune to his brother Ring, another morning meeting had place between persons of the same blood and connections. From the instant when the pale light that precedes the day was first seen in the heavens, the windows and doors of the considerable dwelling, on the opposite side of the valley, had been unbarred. Ere the glow of the sun had gilded the sky over the outline of the eastern woods, this example of industry and providence was followed by the inmates of every house in the village, or on the surrounding hills; and by the time the golden globe itself was visible above the trees, there was not a human being in all that settlement, of proper age and health, who was not actively afoot.

It is unnecessary to say that the dwelling particularly named was the present habitation of the household of Mark Heathcote. Though age had sapped the foundations of his strength, and had nearly dried the channels of his existence, the venerable religionist still lived. While his physical perfection had been gradually giving way before the ordinary decay of nature, the moral man was but little altered. It is even probable that his visions of futurity were less dimmed by the mists of carnal interests than when last seen, and that the spirit had gained some portion of that energy which had certainly been abstracted from the more corporeal parts of his existence. At the hour already named, the Puritan was seated in the piazza, which stretched along the whole front of a dwelling, that, however it might be deficient in architectural proportions, was not wanting in the more substantial comforts of a spacious and commodious frontier residence. In order to obtain a faithful portrait of a man so intimately connected with our tale, the reader will fancy him one who had numbered four-score and ten years, with a visage on which deep and constant mental striving had wrought many and menacing furrows, a form that trembled while it yet exhibited the ruins of powerful limb and flexible muscle, and a countenance on which ascetic reflections had engraved a severity, that was but faintly relieved by the gleamings of a natural kindness, which no acquired habits nor any traces of metaphysical thought could ever entirely erase. Across this picture of venerable and self-mortifying age, the first rays of the sun were now softly cast, lighting a dimmed eye and furrowed face with a look of brightness and peace. Per-

haps the blandness of the expression belonged as much to the season and the hour, as to the habitual character of the man. This benignancy of feature, unusual rather in its strength than in its existence, might have been heightened by the fact that his spirit had just wrought in prayer, as was usual, in the circle of his children and dependents, ere they left those retired parts of the building where they had found rest and security during the night. Of the former, none known and cherished in the domestic circle had been absent; and the ample provision that was making for the morning meal sufficiently showed that the number of the latter had in no degree diminished since the reader was familiar with the domestic economy of his household.

Time had produced no very striking alteration in the appearance of Content. It is true that the brown hue of his features had deepened, and that his frame was beginning to lose some of its elasticity and ease of action in the more measured movements of middle age. But the governed temperament of the individual had always kept the animal in more than usual subjection. Even his earlier days had rather exhibited the promise than the performance of the ordinary youthful qualities. Mental gravity had long before produced a corresponding physical effect. In reference to his exterior, and using the language of the painter, it would now be said that, without having wrought any change in form and proportions, the colors had been mellowed by time. If a few hairs of gray were sprinkled here and there around his brow, it was as moss gathers on the stones of the edifice, rather furnishing evidence of its increased adhesion and approved stability, than denoting any symptoms of decay.

Not so with his gentle and devoted partner. That softness and sweetness of air which had first touched the heart of Content were still to be seen, though they existed amid the traces of a constant and a corroding grief. The freshness of youth had departed, and in its place was visible the more lasting, and, in her case, the more affecting beauty of expression. The eye of Ruth had lost none of its gentleness, and her smile still continued kind and attractive; but the former was often painfully vacant, seeming to look inward upon those secret and withering sources of sorrow that were deeply and almost mysteriously seated in her heart; while the latter resembled the cold brightness of that planet which illumines objects by repelling the bor-

rowed lustre from its own bosom. The matronly form, the feminine beaming of the countenance, and the melodious voice, yet remained ; but the first had been shaken till it stood on the very verge of a premature decay ; the second had a mingling of anxious care in its most sympathetic movements, and the last was seldom without that fearful thrill which so deeply affects the senses by conveying to the understanding a meaning so foreign from the words. And yet an uninterested and ordinary observer might not have seen, in the faded comeliness and blighted maturity of the matron, more than the every-day signs that betray the turn in the tide of human existence. As befitted such a subject, the coloring of sorrow had been traced by a hand too delicate to leave the lines visible to every vulgar eye. Like the master-touches of art, her grief, as it was beyond the sympathies, so it lay beyond the ken of those whom excellence may fail to excite, or in whom absence can deaden affections. Still her feelings were true to all who had any claims on her love. The predominance of wasting grief over the more genial springs of her enjoyments, only went to prove how much greater is the influence of the generous than the selfish qualities of our nature in a heart that is truly endowed with tenderness. It is scarce necessary to say that this gentle and constant woman sorrowed for her child.

Had Ruth Heathcote known that the girl ceased to live, it would not have been difficult for one of her faith to have deposited her regrets by the side of hopes that were so justifiable in the grave of the innocent. But the living death to which her offspring might be condemned, was rarely absent from her thoughts. She listened to the maxims of resignation, which were heard flowing from lips she loved, with the fondness of a woman and the meekness of a Christian ; and then, even while the holy lessons were still sounding in her attentive organs, the workings of an unconquerable nature led her insidiously back to the sorrow of a mother.

The imagination of this devoted and feminine being had never possessed an undue control over her reason. Her visions of happiness with the man whom her judgment not less than her inclination approved, had been such as experience and religion might justify. But she was now fated to learn there is a fearful poetry in sorrow, which can sketch with a grace and an imaginative power that no feeble efforts of a heated fancy may ever equal. She heard the

sweet breathing of her slumbering infant in the whispering of the summer airs ; its plaints came to her ears amid the howlings of the gale ; while the eager question and fond reply were mixed up with the most ordinary intercourse of her own household. To her the laugh of childish happiness that often came on the still air of evening from the hamlet, sounded like the voice of mourning ; and scarce an infantile sport met her eye that did not bring with it a pang of anguish. Twice since the events of the inroad had she been a mother ; and, as if an eternal blight were doomed to destroy her hopes, the little creatures to whom she had given birth, slept side by side near the base of the ruined block. Thither she often went, but it was rather to be the victim of those cruel images of her fancy, than as a mourner. Her visions of the dead were calm and even consolatory, but if ever her thoughts mounted to the abodes of eternal peace, and her feeble fancy essayed to embody the forms of the blessed, her mental eye sought her who was not, rather than those who were believed to be secure in their felicity. Wasting and delusory as were these glimpses of the mind, there were others far more harrowing, because they presented themselves with more of the coarse and certain features of the world. It was the common, and perhaps it was the better, opinion of the inhabitants of the valley, that death had early sealed the fate of those who had fallen into the hands of the savages on the occasion of the inroad. Such a result was in conformity with the known practices and ruthless passions of the conquerors, who seldom spared life unless to render revenge more cruelly refined, or to bring consolation to some bereaved mother of the tribe by offering a substitute for the dead in the person of a captive. There was relief to picture the face of the laughing cherub in the clouds, or to listen to its light footstep in the empty halls of the dwelling ; for in these illusive images of the brain, suffering was confined to her own bosom. But when stern reality usurped the place of fancy, and she saw her living daughter shivering in the wintry blasts or sinking beneath the fierce heats of the climate, cheerless in the desolation of female servitude, and suffering meekly the lot of physical weakness beneath a savage master, she endured that anguish which was gradually exhausting the springs of life.

Though the father was not altogether exempt from similar sorrow, it beset him less ceaselessly. He knew how to struggle with the workings of his mind as best became a

man. Though strongly impressed with the belief that the captives had early been put beyond the reach of suffering, he had neglected no duty which tenderness to his sorrowing partner, parental love, or Christian duty, could require at his hands.

The Indians had retired on the crust of the snow, and with the thaw every footprint, or sign by which such wary foes might be traced, had vanished. It remained matter of doubt to what tribe or even to what nation the marauders belonged. The peace of the colony had not yet been openly broken, and the inroad had been rather a violent and fierce symptom of the evils that were contemplated, than the actual commencement of the ruthless hostilities which had since ravaged the frontier. But while policy had kept the colonists quiet, private affection omitted no rational means of effecting the restoration of the sufferers, in the event of their having been spared.

Scouts had passed among the conspiring and but half-peaceable tribes nearest to the settlement, and rewards and menaces had both been liberally used, in order to ascertain the character of the savages who had laid waste the valley, as well as the more interesting fortunes of their hapless victims. Every expedient to detect the truth had failed. The Narragansetts affirmed that their constant enemies, the Mohicans, acting with their customary treachery, had plundered their English friends, while the Mohicans vehemently threw back the imputation on the Narragansetts. At other times, some Indians affected to make dark allusions to the hostile feelings of fierce warriors, who, under the name of the Five Nations, were known to reside within the limits of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, and to dwell upon the jealousy of the pale-faces who spoke a language different from that of the Yengeese. In short, inquiry had produced no result, and Content, when he did permit his fancy to represent his daughter as still living, was forced to admit to himself the probability that she might be buried far in the ocean of wilderness which then covered most of the surface of this continent.

Once, indeed, a rumor of an exciting nature had reached the family. An itinerant trader bound from the wilds of the interior to a mart on the sea-shore, had entered the valley. He brought with him a report that a child answering in some respects to the appearance which might now be supposed to belong to her who was lost, was living among the savages, on the banks of the smaller lakes of

the adjoining colony. The distance to this spot was great ; the path led through a thousand dangers, and the result was far from certain. Yet it quickened hopes which had long been dormant. Ruth never urged any request that might involve serious hazard to her husband, and for many months the latter had even ceased to speak on the subject. Still, nature was working powerfully within him. His eyes, at all times reflecting and calm, grew more thoughtful ; deeper lines of care gathered about his brow, and at length melancholy took possession of a countenance which was usually so placid.

It was at this precise period, that Eben Dudley chose to urge the suit he had always pressed after his own desultory fashion, on the decision of Faith. One of those well ordered accidents, which, from time to time, had brought the girl and the young borderer in private conversation, enabled him to effect his design with sufficient clearness. Faith heard him without betraying any of her ordinary waywardness, and answered with as little prevarication as the subject seemed to demand.

"This is well, Eben Dudley," she said, "and it is no more than an honest girl hath a right to hear from one who hath taken as many means as thou to get into her favor. But he who would have his life tormented by me, hath a solemn duty to do, ere I listen to his wishes."

"I have been in the lower towns and studied their manner of life, and I have been upon the scouts of the colony, to keep the Indians in their wigwams," returned the suitor, endeavoring to recount the feats of manliness that might reasonably be expected of one inclined to venture on so hazardous an experiment as matrimony. "The bargain with the young captain for the hill lot, and for a village homestead, is drawing near a close, and as the neighbors will not be backward at the stone-bee, or the raising, I see nothing to——"

"Thou deceivest thyself, observant Dudley," interrupted the girl, "if thou believest eye of thine can see that which is to be sought, ere one and the same fortune shall be the property of thee and me. Hast noted, Eben, the manner in which the cheek of the madam hath paled, and how her eye is getting sunken, since the time when the fur trader tarried with us, the week of the storm?"

"I cannot say that there is much change in the wearing of the madam within the bearing of my memory," answered Dudley, who was never remarkable for minute observations

of this nature, however keen he might prove in subjects more intimately connected with his daily pursuits. "She is not young and blooming as thou, Faith; nor is it often that we see——"

"I tell thee, man, that sorrow preyeth upon her form, and that she liveth but in the memory of the lost infant!"

"This is carrying mourning beyond the bounds of reason. The child is at peace, as is thy brother Whittal, beyond all manner of question. That we have not discovered their bones, is owing to the fire, which left but little to tell of——"

"Thy head is a charnel-house, dull Dudley; but this picture of its furniture shall not suffice for me. The man who is to be my husband, must have a feeling for a mother's sorrows!"

"What is now getting uppermost in thy mind, Faith? Is it for me to bring back the dead to life, or to place a child that hath been lost so many years, once more in the arms of its parents?"

"It is.—Nay, open not thine eyes, as if light were first breaking into the darkness of a clouded brain! I repeat, it is!"

"I am glad that we have got to these open declarations; for too much of my life hath been already wasted in unsettled gallanting, when sound wisdom and the example of all around me, have shown that in order to become the father of a family, and to be esteemed for a substantial settler, I should have both cleared and wived some years ago. I wish to deal justly by all, and having given thee reason to think that the day might come when we should live together, as is fitting to people of our condition, I felt it a duty to ask thee to share my chances; but now that thou dealest in impossibilities, it is needful to seek elsewhere."

"This hath ever been thy way when a good understanding hath been established between us. Thy mind is ever getting into some discontent, and then blame is heaped on one who rarely doth anything that should in reason offend thee. What madness maketh thee dream that I ask impossibilities? Surely, Dudley, thou canst not have noticed the manner in which the nature of the madam is giving way before the consuming heat of her grief; thou canst not look into the sorrow of woman, or thou wouldst have listened with more kindness to a plan of travelling the woods for a short season, in order that it might be known whether she

of whom the trader spoke is the lost one of our family, or the child of some stranger!"

Though Faith spoke with vexation, she also spoke with feeling. Her dark eye swam in tears, and the color of her brown cheek deepened, until her companion saw new reasons to forget his discontent in sympathies, which, however obtuse they might be, were never entirely dormant.

"If a journey of a few hundred miles be all thou askest, girl, why speak in parables?" he good-naturedly replied. "The kind word was not wanting to put me on such a trial. We will be married on the Sabbath, and, please Heaven, the Wednesday or the Saturday at most, shall see me on the path of the western trader."

"No delay. Thou must depart with the sun. The more active thou provest on the journey, the sooner wilt thou have the power to make me repent a foolish deed."

But Faith had been persuaded to relax a little from this severity. They were married on the Sabbath, and the following day Content and Dudley left the valley in quest of the distant tribe on which the scion of another stock was said to have been so violently engrafted.

It is needless to dwell on the dangers and privations of such an expedition. The Hudson, the Delaware, and the Susquehanna, rivers that were then better known in tales than to the inhabitants of New England, were all crossed; and after a painful and hazardous journey, the adventurers reached the first of that collection of small interior lakes whose banks are now so beautifully decorated with villages and farms. Here, in the bosom of savage tribes, and exposed to every danger of field and flood, supported only by his hopes, and by the presence of a stout companion that hardships or danger could not easily subdue, the father diligently sought his child.

At length a people was found who held a captive that answered the description of the trader. We shall not dwell on the feelings with which Content approached the village that contained this little descendant of a white race. He had not concealed his errand; and the sacred character in which he came, found pity and respect even among those barbarous tenants of the wilderness. A deputation of the chiefs received him in the skirts of their clearing. He was conducted to a wigwam where a council-fire was lighted, and an interpreter opened the subject by placing the amount of the ransom offered, and the professions of peace with which the strangers came, in the fairest light before

his auditors. It is not usual for the American savage to loosen his hold easily on one naturalized in his tribe. But the meek air and noble confidence of Content touched the latent qualities of those generous though fierce children of the woods. The girl was sent for, that she might stand in the presence of the elders of the nation.

No language can paint the sensation with which Content first looked upon this adopted daughter of the savages. The years and sex were in accordance with his wishes; but in place of the golden hair and azure eyes of the cherub he had lost, there appeared a girl in whose jet-black tresses and equally dark organs of sight, he might better trace a descendant of the French of the Canadas, than one sprung from his own Saxon lineage. The father was not quick of mind in the ordinary occupations of life, but nature was now big within him. There needed no second glance to say how cruelly his hopes had been deceived. A smothered groan struggled from his chest, and then his self-command returned with the imposing grandeur of Christian resignation. He arose, and thanking the chiefs for their indulgence, he made no secret of the mistake by which he had been led so far on a fruitless errand. While speaking, the signs and gestures of Dudley gave him reason to believe that his companion had something of importance to communicate. In a private interview, the latter suggested the expediency of concealing the truth, and of rescuing the child they had in fact discovered from the hands of her barbarous masters. It was now too late to practise a deception that might have availed for this object, had the stern principles of Content permitted the artifice. But transferring some portion of the interest which he felt for the fortunes of his own offspring to that of the unknown parent, who like himself most probably mourned the uncertain fate of the girl before him, he tendered the ransom intended for Ruth in behalf of the captive. It was rejected. Disappointed in both their objects, the adventurers were obliged to quit the village with weary feet and still heavier hearts.

If any who read these pages have ever felt the agony of suspense in a matter involving the best of human affections, they will know how to appreciate the sufferings of the mother during the month that her husband was absent on this holy errand. At times hope brightened around her heart, until the glow of pleasure was again mantling on her cheek and playing in her eye. The first week of the ad-

venture was one almost of happiness. The hazards of the journey were nearly forgotten in its anticipated results, and though occasional apprehensions quickened the pulses of one whose system answered so fearfully to the movements of the spirit, there was a predominance of hope in all her anticipations. She again passed among her maidens with a mien in which joy was struggling with the meekness of subdued habits, and her smiles once more began to beam with renovated happiness. To his dying day old Mark Héathcote never forgot the sudden sensation that was created by the soft laugh that on some unexpected occasion came to his ear from the lips of his son's wife. Though years had elapsed between the moment when that unwonted sound was heard, and the time at which the action of the tale now stands, he never heard it repeated. To heighten the feelings which were now uppermost in the mind of Ruth, when within a day's march of the village to which he was going, Content had found the means to send the tidings of his prospects of success. It was over all these renewed wishes that disappointment was to throw its chill, and it was affections thus riveted that were to be again blighted by the cruellest of all withering influences,—that of hope defeated.

It was near the hour of the setting of the sun when Content and Dudley reached the deserted clearing on their return to the valley. Their path led through this opening on the mountain-side, and there was one point among the bushes from which the buildings that had already arisen from the ashes of the burning might be distinctly seen. Until now, the husband and father had believed himself equal to any effort that duty might require in the progress of this mournful service. But here he paused, and communicated a wish to his companion that he would go ahead and break the nature of the deception that led them so far on a fruitless mission. Perhaps Content was himself ignorant of all he wished, or to what unskilful hands he had confided a commission of more than ordinary delicacy. He merely felt his own inability, and with a weakness that may find some apology in his feelings, he saw his companion depart without instructions or indeed without any other guide than Nature.

Though Faith had betrayed no marked uneasiness during the absence of the travellers, her quick eye was the first to discover the form of her husband, as he came with a tired step across the fields, in the direction of the dwellings

Long ere Dudley reached the house, every one of its inmates had assembled in the piazza. This was no meeting of turbulent delight or of clamorous greetings. The adventurer drew near amid a silence so oppressive, that it utterly disconcerted a studied project, by which he had hoped to announce his tidings in a manner suited to the occasion. His hand was on the gate of the little court, and still none spoke ; his foot was on the low step, and yet no voice bade him welcome. The looks of the little group were rather fixed on the features of Ruth than on the person of him who approached. Her face was pallid as death, her eye contracted, but filled with the mental effort that sustained her, and her lip scarce trembled, as in obedience to a feeling still stronger than the one which had so long oppressed her, she exclaimed—

“Eben Dudley, where hast thou left my husband?”

“The young captain was foot-weary, and he tarried in the second growth of the hill ; but so brave a walker cannot be far behind. We shall see him soon, at the opening by the dead beech ; and it is there that I recommend the madam——”

“It was thoughtful in Heathcote, and like his usual kindness, to devise this well-meant caution,” said Ruth, across whose countenance a smile so radiant passed, that it imparted the expression which is believed to characterize the peculiar benignancy of angels. “Still it was unnecessary ; for he should have known that we place our strength on the Rock of Ages. Tell me, in what manner hath my precious one borne the exceeding weariness of thy tangled-route?”

The wandering glance of the messenger had gone from face to face, until it became fastened on the countenance of his own wife, in a settled, unmeaning gaze.

“Nay, Faith hath demeaned well, both as my assistant and as thy partner, and thou mayest see that her comeliness is in no degree changed. And did the babe falter in this weary passage, or did she retard thy movements by her fretfulness? But I know thy nature, man ; she hath been borne over many long miles of mountain-side and treacherous swamp in thine own vigorous arms. Thou answerest not, Dudley!” exclaimed Ruth, taking the alarm, and laying a hand firmly on the shoulder of him she questioned ; as forcing his half-averted face to meet her eye, she seemed to read his soul.

The muscles of the sunburnt and strong features of the

borderer worked involuntarily, his broad chest swelled to its utmost expansion, big burning drops rolled out upon his brown cheeks, and then taking the arm of Ruth in one of his own powerful hands, he compelled her to release her hold, with a firm but respectful exercise of his strength; and thrusting the form of his own wife without ceremony aside, he passed through the circle, and entered the dwelling with the tread of a giant.

The head of Ruth dropped upon her bosom, the paleness again came over her cheeks, and it was then that the inward look of the eye might first be seen, which afterward became so constant and so painful an expression in her countenance. From that hour to the time in which the family of the Wish-Ton-Wish is again brought immediately before the reader, no further rumors were ever heard, to lessen or increase the wasting regrets of her bosom.

CHAPTER XX.

"Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book; he hath not eaten paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal—only sensible in the duller parts."

—*Love's Labor's Lost.*

"HERE cometh Faith, to bring us tidings of the hamlet," said the husband of the woman whose character we have so feebly sketched, as he took his seat in the piazza, at the early hour and in the group already mentioned. "The ensign hath been abroad on the hills throughout the night, with a chosen party of our people; and perchance she hath been sent with the substance that they have gathered, concerning the unknown trail."

"The heavy-footed Dudley hath scarce mounted to the dividing ridge, where report goeth the prints of moccasins were seen," observed a young man, who in his person bore all the evidences of an active and healthful manhood. "Of what service is the scouting that faileth of the necessary distance, by the weariness of its leader?"

"If thou believest, boy, that thy young foot is equal to contend with the sinews of Eben Dudley, there may be occasion to show the magnitude of thy error, ere the danger of this Indian out-breaking shall pass away. Thou art too stubborn of will, Mark, to be yet trusted with the lead-

ing of parties that may hold the safety of all who dwell in the Wish-Ton-Wish within their keeping."

The young man looked displeased; but, fearful that his father might observe and misinterpret his humor into a personal disrespect, he turned away, permitting his frowning eye to rest for an instant on the timid and stolen glance of a maiden, whose cheek was glowing like the eastern sky, as she busied herself with the preparations of the table.

"What welcome news dost bring from the sign of the Whip-Poor-Will?" Content asked of the woman who had now come within the little gate of his court. "Hast seen the ensign since the party took the hill-paths, or is it some traveller who hath charged thee with matter for our ears?"

"Eye of man hath not seen the man since he girded himself with the sword of office," returned Faith, entering the piazza and noddingsalutation to those around her; "and as for strangers, when the clock shall strike noon, it will be one month to the day that the last of them was housed within my doors. But I complain not of the want of custom, as the ensign would never quit the bar and his gossip to go into the mountain lots, so long as there was one to fill his ears with the marvels of the old countries, or even to discourse of the home-stirrings of the colonies themselves."

"Thou speakest lightly, Faith, of one who merits thy respect and thy duty."

The eye of the former studied the meek countenance of her from whom this reproof came, with an intenseness and a melancholy that showed her thoughts were on other matters, and then, as if suddenly recalled to what had passed, she resumed—

"Truly, what with duty to the man as a husband, and respect to him as an officer of the colony, Madam Heathcote, the task is not one of easy bearing. If the king's representative had given the colors to my brother Reuben, and left the Dudley with the halberd in his hand, the preferment would have been ample for one of his qualities, and all the better for the credit of the settlement."

"The governor distributed his favor according to the advice of men competent to distinguish merit," said Content. "Eben was foremost in the bloody affair among the people of the Plantations, where his manhood was of good example to all in company. Should he continue as faithful and as valiant, thou mayest yet live to see thyself the consort of a captain!"

"Not for glory gained in this night's marching ; for yonder cometh the man with a sound body, and seemingly with the stomach of a Cæsar—aye, and I'll answer for it, of a regiment too ! It is no trifle that will satisfy his appetite, after one of these—ha ! Pray Heaven the fellow be not harmed. Truly, he hath our neighbor Ergot in attendance."

"There is other than he too ; for one cometh in the rear whose gait and air are unknown to me. The trail hath been struck, and Dudley leadeth a captive ! A savage in his paint and cloak of skin is taken."

This assertion caused all to rise—for the excitement of an apprehended inroad was still strong in the minds of those secluded people. Not a syllable more was uttered until the scout and his companion were before them.

The quick glance of Faith had scanned the person of her husband, and, resuming her spirits with the certainty that he was unharmed, she was the first to greet him with words :

"How now, Ensign Dudley ?" said the woman, quite possibly vexed that she had unguardedly betrayed a greater interest in his welfare than she might always deem prudent. "How now, ensign—hath the campaign ended with no better trophy than this ?"

"The fellow is not a chief, nor, by his step and dull look, even a warrior ; but he was, nevertheless, a lurker nigh the settlements, and it was thought prudent to bring him in," returned the husband, addressing himself to Content, while he answered the salutation of his wife with a sufficiently brief nod. "My own scouting hath brought nothing to light ; but my brother Ring hath fallen on the trail of him that is here present, and it is not a little that we are puzzled in probing, as the good Doctor Ergot calleth it, into the meaning of his errand."

"Of what tribe may the savage be ?"

"There hath been discussion among us on that matter," returned Dudley, with an oblique glance of the eye toward the physician. "Some have said he is a Narragansett, while others think he cometh of a stock still further east."

"In giving that opinion, I spoke merely of his secondary or acquired habits," interrupted Ergot ; "for, having reference to his original, the man is assuredly a white."

"A white !" repeated all around him.

"Beyond a cavil, as may be seen by divers particulars

in his outward conformation, viz., in the shape of the head, the muscles of the arms and of the legs, the air and gait, besides sundry other signs, that are familiar to men who have made the physical peculiarities of the two races their study."

"One of which is this!" continued Dudley, throwing up the robe of the captive, and giving his companions the ocular evidence which had so satisfactorily removed all his own doubts. "Though the color of the skin may not be proof positive, like that named by our neighbor Ergot, it is still something, in helping a man of little learning to make up an opinion in such a matter."

"Madam!" exclaimed Faith so suddenly as to cause her she addressed to start, "for the sake of Heaven's mercy! let thy maidens bring soap and water, that the face of this man may be cleansed of its paint."

"What foolishness is thy brain set upon?" rejoined the ensign, who had latterly affected some of that superior gravity which might be supposed to belong to his official station. "We are not now under the roof of the Whip-Poor-Will, wife of mine, but in the presence of those who need none of thy suggestions to give proper forms to an examination of office."

Faith heeded no reproof. Instead of waiting for others to perform that which she had desired, she applied herself to the task, with a dexterity that had been acquired by long practice, and a zeal that seemed awakened by some extraordinary emotion. In a minute the colors had disappeared from the features of the captive, and, though deeply tanned by exposure to an American sun and to sultry winds, his face was unequivocally that of one who owed his origin to a European ancestry. The movements of the eager woman were watched with curious interest by all present, and when the short task was ended, a murmur of surprise broke simultaneously from every lip.

"There is meaning in this masquerade," observed Content, who had long and intently studied the dull and ungainly countenance that was exposed to his scrutiny by the operation. "I have heard of Christian men who have sold themselves to gain, and who, forgetting religion and the love of their race, have been known to league with the savage in order to pursue rapine in the settlements. This wretch hath the subtlety of one of the French of the Canadas in his eye."

"Away! away!" cried Faith, forcing herself in front of

the speaker, and, by placing her two hands on the shaven crown of the prisoner, forming a sort of shade to his features. "Away with all folly about the Frenchers and wicked leagues! This is no plotting miscreant, but a stricken innocent! Whittal—my brother Whittal, dost know me?"

The tears rolled down the cheeks of the wayward woman as she gazed into the face of her witless relative, whose eye lighted with one of its occasional gleamings of intelligence, and who indulged in a low, vacant laugh, ere he answered her earnest interrogatory.

"Some speak like men from over sea," he said, "and some speak like men of the woods. Is there such a thing as bear's meat or a mouthful of hommony in the wigwam?"

Had the voice of one long known to be in the grave, broken on the ears of the family, it would scarcely have produced a deeper sensation, or have quickened the blood more violently about their hearts, than this sudden and utterly unexpected discovery of the character of their captive. Wonder and awe held them mute for a time, and then Ruth was seen standing before the restored wanderer, her hands clasped in the attitude of petition, her eye contracted and imploring, and her whole person expressive of the suspense and excitement which had roused her long latent emotions to agony.

"Tell me," said a thrilling voice that might have quickened the intellect of one even duller than the man addressed, "as thou hast pity in thy heart, tell me if my babe yet live?"

"'Tis a good babe," returned the other, and then laughing again in his own vacant and unmeaning manner, he bent his eyes with a species of stupid wonder on Faith, in whose appearance there was far less change than in the speaking but wasted countenance of her who stood immediately before him.

"Give leave, dearest madam," interposed the sister; "I know the nature of the boy, and could ever do more with him than any other."

But this request was useless. The system of the mother, in its present state of excitement, was unequal to further effort. Sinking into the watchful arms of Content, she was borne away, and, for a minute, the anxious interest of the handmaidens left none but the men on the piazza.

"Whittal—my old playfellow, Whittal Ring," said the son of Content, advancing with a humid eye to take the

hand of the prisoner. "Hast forgotten, man, the companion of thy early days? It is young Mark Heathcote that speaks."

The other looked up into his countenance, for a moment, with a reviving recollection: but shaking his head, he drew back in marked displeasure, muttering loud enough to be heard—

"What a false liar is a pale-face! Here is one of the tall rogues wishing to pass for a loping boy!"

What more he uttered his auditors never knew, for he instantly changed his language to some dialect of an Indian tribe.

"The mind of the unhappy youth hath even been more blunted, by exposure and the usages of a savage life, than by nature," said Content, who with most of the others had been recalled, by his interest in the examination, to the scene they had momentarily quitted. "Let the sister deal tenderly with the lad, and, in Heaven's time, shall we learn the truth."

The deep feeling of the father clothed his words with authority. The eager group gave place, and something like the solemnity of an official examination succeeded to the irregular and hurried interrogatories which had first broken on the dull intellect of the recovered wanderer.

The dependents took their stations in a circle around the chair of the Puritan, by whose side was placed Content, while Faith induced her brother to be seated on the step of the piazza, in a manner that all might hear. The attention of the brother himself was drawn from the formality of the arrangement, by placing food in his hands.

"And now, Whittal, I would know," commenced the ready woman, when a deep silence denoted the attention of the auditors, "I would know, if thou rememberest the day I clad thee in garments of boughten cloth, from over sea; and how fond thou wast of being seen among the kine in colors so gay?"

The young man looked up in her face as if the tones of her voice gave him pleasure; but, instead of making any reply, he preferred to munch the bread with which she had endeavored to lure him back to their ancient confidence.

"Surely, boy, thou canst not so soon have forgotten the gift I bought, with the hard earnings of a wheel that turned at night. The tail of yon peacock is not finer than thou then wast—but I will make thee such another gar-

ment, that thou mayest go with the trainers to their weekly muster."

The youth dropped the robe of skin that covered the upper part of his body, and making a forward gesture, with the gravity of an Indian, he answered—

"Whittal is a warrior on his path ; he has no time for the talk of the women !"

"Now, brother, thou forgettest the manner in which I was wont to feed thy hunger, as the frost pinched thee, in the cold mornings, and at the hour when the kine needed thy care ; else thou would'st not call me woman."

"Hast ever been on the trail of a Pequot ? Know'st how to whoop among the men ?"

"What is an Indian whoop to the bleating of the flocks, or the bellowing of cattle in the bushes ! Thou rememberest the sound of the bells, as they tinkled among the second growth of an evening ?"

The former herdsman turned his head, and seemed to lend his attention, as a dog listens to an approaching foot-step. But the gleam of recollection was quickly lost. In the next moment, he yielded to the more positive, and possibly more urgent, demands of his appetite.

"Then hast thou lost the use of ears ; else thou would'st not say that thou forgettest the sound of the bells."

"Didst ever hear a wolf howl ?" exclaimed the other. "That's a sound for a hunter ! I saw the Great Chief strike the striped panther, when the boldest warrior of the tribe grew white as a craven pale-face at his leaps !"

"Talk not to me of your ravenous beasts and great chiefs, but rather let us think of the days when we were young, and when thou had'st delight in the sports of a Christian childhood. Hast forgotten, Whittal, how our mother used to give us leave to pass the idle time in games among the snow ?"

"Nipset hath a mother in her wigwam, but he asketh no leave to go on the hunt. He is a man ; the next snow, he will be a warrior."

"Silly boy ! This is some treachery of the savage, by which he has bound thy weakness with the fetters of his craftiness. Thy mother, Whittal, was a woman of Christian belief, and one of a white race ; and a kind and mourning mother was she over thy feeble-mindedness ! Dost not remember, unthankful of heart ! how she nursed thy sickly hours in boyhood, and how she administered to all thy bodily wants ? Who was it that fed thee when a-hungred,

or who had compassion on thy waywardness, when others tired of thy idle deeds, or grew impatient at thy weakness?"

The brother looked, for an instant, at the flushed features of the speaker, as if glimmerings of some faintly distinguished scenes crossed the visions of his mind; but the animal still predominated, and he continued to feed his hunger.

"This exceedeth human endurance!" exclaimed the excited Faith. "Look into this eye, weak one, and say if thou knowest her who supplied the place of that mother whom thou refusest to remember—she who hath toiled for thy comfort, and who hath never refused to listen to all thy complaints, and to soften all thy sufferings. Look at this eye, and speak—dost know me?"

"Certain!" returned the other, laughing with a half intelligent expression of recognition; "'tis a woman of the pale-faces, and I warrant me, one that will never be satisfied till she hath all the furs of the Americas on her back, and all the venison of the woods in her kitchen. Didst ever hear the tradition, how that wicked race got into the hunting-grounds, and robbed the warriors of the country?"

The disappointment of Faith had made her too impatient to lend a pleased attention to this tale; but, at that moment, a form appeared at her side, and by a quiet and commanding gesture directed her to humor the temper of the wanderer.

It was Ruth, in whose pale cheek and anxious eye, all the intenseness of a mother's longings might be traced, in its most touching aspect. Though so lately helpless and sinking beneath her emotions, the sacred feelings which now sustained her seemed to supply the place of all other aid; and as she glided past the listening circle, even Content himself had not believed it necessary to offer succor, or to interpose with remonstrance. Her quiet, meaning gesture seemed to say, "proceed, and show all the indulgence to the weakness of the young man." The rising discontent of Faith was checked by habitual reverence, and she prepared to obey.

"And what say the silly traditions of which you speak?" she added, ere the current of his dull ideas had time to change its direction.

"'Tis spoken by the old men in the villages, and what is there said is gospel-true. You see all around you land that is covered with hill and valley, and which once bore wood, without the fear of the axe, and over which game

was spread with a bountiful hand. There are runners and hunters in our tribe, who have been on a straight path toward the setting sun, until their legs were weary and their eyes could not see the clouds that hang over the salt lake, and yet they say, 'tis everywhere beautiful as yonder green mountain. Tall trees and shady woods, rivers and lakes filled with fish, and dear and beaver plentiful as the sands on the sea-shore. All this land and water the Great Spirit gave to men of red skins; for them he loved, since they spoke truth in their tribes, were true to their friends, hated their enemies, and knew how to take scalps. Now, a thousand snows had come and melted, since this gift was made," continued Whittal, who spoke with the air of one charged with the narration of a grave tradition, though he probably did no more than relate what many repetitions had rendered familiar to his inactive mind, "and yet none but red-skins were seen to hunt the moose, or to go on the war-path. Then the Great Spirit grew angry; he hid his face from his children, because they quarrelled among themselves. Big canoes came out of the rising sun, and brought a hungry and wicked people into the land. At first, the strangers spoke soft and complaining like women. They begged room for a few wigwams, and said if the warriors would give them ground to plant they would ask their God to look upon the red men. But when they grew strong they forgot their words and made liars of themselves. Oh, they are wicked knaves! A pale-face is a panther. When a-hungred, you can hear him whining in the bushes like a strayed infant; but when you come within his leap beware of tooth and claw!"

"This evil-minded race, then, robbed the red warriors of their land?"

"Certain! They spoke like sick women till they grew strong, and then they out-devilled the Pequods themselves in wickedness; feeding the warriors with their burning milk, and slaying with blazing inventions, that they made out of the yellow meal."

"And the Pequods! was their great warrior dead before the coming of the men from over sea?"

"You are a woman that has never heard a tradition, or you would know better! A Pequod is a weak and crawling cub."

"And thou—thou art, then, a Narragansett?"

"Don't I look like a man?"

"I had mistaken thee for one of our nearer neighbors, the Mohegan Pequods."

"The Mohicans are basket makers for the Yengeese; but the Narragansett goes leaping through the woods like a wolf on the trail of the deer!"

"All this is quite in reason, and now thou pointest to its justice, I cannot fail but see it. But we have curiosity to know more of the great tribe. Hast ever heard of one of thy people, Whittal, known as Miantonimoh—'tis a chief of some renown?"

The witless youth had continued to eat at intervals, but, on hearing this question, he seemed suddenly to forget his appetite. For a moment he looked down, and then he answered slowly and not without solemnity—

"A man cannot live forever."

"What!" said Faith, motioning to her deeply-interested auditors to restrain their impatience, "has he quitted his people? And thou lived with him, Whittal, ere he came to his end?"

"He never looked on Nipset, or Nipset on him."

"I know naught of this Nipset; tell me of the great Miantonimoh."

"Dost need to hear twice? The sachem is gone to the far land, and Nipset will be a warrior when the next snow comes!"

Disappointment threw a cloud on every countenance, and the beam of hope, which had been kindled in the eye of Ruth, changed to the former painful expression of deep inward suffering. But Faith still managed to repress all speech among those who listened, continuing the examination, after a short delay that her vexation rendered unavoidable.

"I had thought that Miantonimoh was still a warrior in his tribe," she said. "In what battle did he fall?"

"Mohican Uncas did that wicked deed. The pale-men gave him great riches to murder the sachem."

"Thou speakest of the father; but there was another Miantonimoh; he who in boyhood dwelt among the people of white blood."

Whittal listened attentively, and after seeming to rally his thoughts, he shook his head, saying before he again began to eat—

"There never was but one of the name, and there never will be another. Two eagles do not build their nests in the same tree."

"Thou sayest truly," continued Faith; well knowing that to dispute the information of her brother was, in effect, to close his mouth. "Now tell me of Conanchet, the present Narragansett sachem—he who hath leagued with Metacom, and hath of late been driven from his fastness near the sea—doth he yet live?"

The expression of the brother's countenance underwent another change. In place of the childish importance with which he had hitherto replied to the questions of his sister, a look of overreaching cunning gathered about his dull eye. The organ glanced slowly and cautiously around him, as if its owner expected to detect some visible sign of those covert intentions he so evidently distrusted. Instead of answering, the wanderer continued his meal, though less like one who had need of sustenance, than one resolved to make no communications which might prove dangerous. This change was not unobserved by Faith, nor by any of those who so intently watched the means by which she had been endeavoring to thread the confused ideas of one so dull, and yet who at need seemed so practised in savage artifice. She prudently altered her manner of interrogating by endeavoring to lead his thoughts to other matters.

"I warrant me," continued the sister, "that thou now beginnest to call to mind the times when thou led'st the cattle among the bushes, and how thou wert wont to call on Faith to give thee food, when a-weary with threading the woods in quest of the kine. Hast ever been assailed by the Narragansetts thyself, Whittal, when dwelling in the house of a pale-face?"

The brother ceased eating. Again he appeared to muse, as intently as was possible for one of his circumscribed intellects. But shaking his head in the negative, he silently resumed the grateful office of mastication.

"What! hast come to be a warrior, and never known a scalp taken, or seen a fire lighted in the roof of a wigwam?"

Whittal laid down the food, and turned to his sister. His face was teeming with a wild and fierce meaning, and he indulged in a low but triumphant laugh. When this exhibition of satisfaction was over, he consented to reply.

"Certain," he said. "We went on a path in the night, against the lying Yengeese, and no burning of the woods ever scorched the 'arth as we blackened their fields! All their proud housen were turned into piles of coals."

"And where and when did you this act of brave vengeance?"

"They called the place after the bird of night; as if an Indian name could save them from an Indian massacre!"

"Ha! 'Tis of the Wish-Ton-Wish thou speakest! But thou wast a sufferer, and not an actor, brother, in that heartless burning."

"Thou liest like a wicked woman of the pale-faces, as thou art! Nipset was only a boy on that path, but he went with his people. I tell thee we singed the very 'arth with our brands, and not a head of them all ever rose again from the ashes."

Notwithstanding her great self-command, and the object that was constantly before the mind of Faith, she shuddered at the fierce pleasure with which her brother pronounced the extent of the vengeance that in his imaginary character he believed he had taken on his enemies. Still, cautious not to destroy an illusion which might aid her in the so long-defeated and so anxiously-desired discovery, the woman repressed her horror, and continued—

"True,—yet some were spared; surely the warriors carried prisoners back to their village. Thou didst not slay all?"

"All."

"Nay; thou speakest now of the miserables who were wrapped in the blazing block; but—but some without might have fallen into thy hands, ere the assailed sought shelter in the tower. Surely, surely thou didst not kill all?"

The hard breathing of Ruth caught the ear of Whittal, and for a moment he turned to regard her countenance in dull wonder. But again shaking his head, he answered, in a low, positive tone—

"All;—aye, to the screeching women and crying babes!"

"Surely, there is a child,—I would say there is a woman in thy tribe of fairer skin and of form different from most of thy people. Was not such a one led a captive from the burning of the Wish-Ton-Wish?"

"Dost think the deer will live with the wolf, or hast ever found the cowardly pigeon in the nest of the hawk?"

"Nay, thou art of different color thyself, Whittal, and it well may be thou art not alone."

The youth regarded his sister a moment with marked displeasure, and then on turning to eat he muttered—

"There is as much fire in snow as truth in a lying Yengeese!"

"This examination must close," said Content, with a heavy sigh; "at another hour we may hope to push the matter to some more fortunate result; but yonder cometh one charged with especial service from the town below, as would seem by the fact that he disregardeth the holiness of the day, no less than by the earnest manner in which he is journeying."

As the individual named was visible to all who chose to look in the direction of the hamlet, his sudden appearance caused a general interruption to the interest which had been so strongly awakened on a subject that was familiar to every resident in the valley.

The early hour, the gait at which the stranger urged his horse, the manner in which he passed the open and inviting door of the Whip-Poor-Will, proclaimed him a messenger, who probably bore some communication of importance from the government of the colony to the younger Heathcote, who filled the highest station of official authority in that distant settlement. Observations to this purport had passed from mouth to mouth, and curiosity was actively alive by the time the horseman rode into the court. There he dismounted, and covered with the dust of the road he presented himself, with the air of one who had passed the night in the saddle, before the man he sought.

"I have orders for Captain Content Heathcote," said the messenger, saluting all around him with the usual grave but studied courtesy of the people to whom he belonged.

"He is here to receive and to obey," was the answer.

The traveller wore a little of that mysteriousness that is so grateful to certain minds, which, from inability to command respect in any other manner, are fond of making secrets of matters that might as well be revealed. In obedience to this feeling he expressed a desire that his communications might be made apart. Content quietly motioned for him to follow, leading the way into an inner apartment of the house. As a new direction was given by this interruption to the thoughts of the spectators of the foregoing scene, we shall also take the opportunity to digress, in order to lay before the reader some general facts that may be necessary to the connection of the subsequent parts of the legend.

CHAPTER XXI.

“Be certain what you do, sir ; lest your justice
Prove violence.”—*Winter's Tale*.

THE designs of the celebrated Metacom had been betrayed to the colonists by the treachery of a subordinate warrior, named Sausaman. The punishment of this treason led to inquiries which terminated in accusations against the great sachem of the Wampanoags. Scorning to vindicate himself before enemies that he hated, and perhaps distrusting their clemency, Metacom no longer endeavored to cloak his proceedings, but throwing aside the emblems of peace, he openly appeared with an armed hand.

The tragedy had commenced about a year before the period at which the tale has now arrived. A scene not unlike that detailed in the foregoing pages took place ; the brand, the knife, and the tomahawk doing their work of destruction, without pity and without remorse. But unlike the inroad of the Wish-Ton-Wish, this expedition was immediately followed by others, until the whole of New England was engaged in the celebrated war, to which we have before referred.

The entire white population of the colonies of New England had shortly before been estimated at one hundred and twenty thousand souls. Of this number it was thought that sixteen thousand men were capable of bearing arms. Had time been given for the maturity of the plans of Metacom, he might have readily assembled bands of warriors, who, aided by their familiarity with the woods, and accustomed to the privations of such a warfare, would have threatened serious danger to the growing strength of the whites. But the ordinary and selfish feelings of man were as active among these wild tribes as they are known to be in more artificial communities. The indefatigable Metacom, like that Indian hero of our own times, Tecumthè, had passed years in endeavoring to appease ancient enmities and to lull jealousies, in order that all of red blood might unite in crushing a foe that promised, should he be longer undisturbed in his march to power, soon to be too formidable for their united efforts to subdue. The premature explosion in some measure averted the danger. It gave the English time to strike several severe blows against

the tribe of their great enemy, before his allies had determined to make common cause in his design. The summer and autumn of 1675 had been passed in active hostilities between the English and Wampanoags, without openly drawing any other nation into the contest. Some of the Pequods, with their dependent tribes, even took sides with the whites ; and we read of the Mohicans being actively employed in harassing the sachem on his well-known retreat from that neck of land, where he had been hemmed in by the English, with the expectation that he might be starved into submission.

The warfare of the first summer was, as might be expected, attended by various degrees of success, fortune quite as often favoring the red men, in their desultory attempts at annoyance, as their more disciplined enemies. Instead of confining his operations to his own circumscribed and easily environed districts, Metacom had led his warriors to the distant settlements on the Connecticut ; and it was during the operations of this season that several of the towns on that river were first assailed and laid in ashes. Active hostilities had in some measure ceased between the Wampanoags and the English, with the cold weather, most of the troops retiring to their homes, while the Indians apparently paused to take breath for their final effort.

It was, however, previously to this cessation of activity, that the commissioners of the united colonies, as they were called, met to devise the means of a concerted resistance. Unlike their former dangers from the same quarter, it was manifest by the manner in which a hostile feeling was spreading around their whole frontier, that a leading spirit had given as much of unity and design to the movements of the foe as could probably ever be created among a people so separated by distance and so divided in communities. Right or wrong, the colonists gravely decided that the war on their part was just. Great preparations were therefore made to carry it on the ensuing summer, in a manner more suited to their means, and to the absolute necessities of their situation. It was in consequence of the arrangements made for bringing a portion of the inhabitants of the Colony of Connecticut into the field that we find the principal characters of our legend in the warlike guise in which they have just been re-introduced to the reader.

Although the Narragansetts had not at first been openly implicated in the attacks on the colonists, facts soon came

to the knowledge of the latter, which left no doubt of the state of feeling in that nation. Many of their young men were discovered among the followers of Metacom, and arms taken from whites who had been slain in the different encounters were also seen in their villages. One of the first measures of the commissioners, therefore, was to anticipate more serious opposition, by directing an overwhelming force against this people. The party collected on that occasion was probably the largest military body which the English at that early day had ever assembled in their colonies. It consisted of a thousand men, of whom no inconsiderable number was cavalry—a species of troops that, as all subsequent experience has shown, is admirably adapted to operations against so active and so subtle a foe.

The attack was made in the depth of winter, and it proved fearfully destructive to the assailed. The defence of Conanchet, the young sachem of the Narragansetts, was every way worthy of his high character for courage and mental resources, nor was the victory gained without serious loss to the colonists. The native chief had collected his warriors, and taken post on a small area of firm land that was situated in the centre of a densely wooded swamp; and the preparations for resistance betrayed a singular familiarity with the military expedients of a white man. There had been a palisadoed breast-work, a species of redoubt, and a regular block-house to overcome, ere the colonists could penetrate into the fortified village itself. The first attempts were unsuccessful, the Indians having repulsed their enemies with loss. But better arms and greater concert finally prevailed, though not without a struggle that lasted for many hours, and not until the defendants were, in truth, nearly surrounded.

The events of that memorable day made a deep impression on the minds of men who were rarely excited by any incidents of a great and moving character. It was still the subject of earnest, and not unfrequently of melancholy discourse, around the fire-sides of the colonists; nor was the victory achieved without accompaniments, which, however unavoidable they might have been, had a tendency to raise doubts in the minds of conscientious religionists, concerning the lawfulness of their cause. It is said that a village of six hundred cabins was burnt, and that hundreds of dead and wounded were consumed in the conflagration. A thousand warriors were thought to have lost their lives in this affair, and it was believed that the power of the nation

was broken forever. The sufferers among the colonists themselves were numerous, and mourning came into a vast many families, with the tidings of victory.

In this expedition most of the men of the Wish-Ton-Wish had been conspicuous actors, under the orders of Content. They had not escaped with impunity ; but it was confidently hoped that their courage was to meet its reward in a long continuance of peace, which was the more desirable on account of their remote and exposed situation.

In the meantime the Narragansetts were far from being subdued. Throughout the whole continuance of the inclement season they had caused alarms on the frontiers ; and in one or two instances their renowned sachem had taken signal vengeance for the dire affair in which his people had so heavily suffered. As the spring advanced the inroads became still more frequent, and the appearances of danger so far increased as to require a new call on the colonists to arm. The messenger introduced in the last chapter was charged with matter that had a reference to the events of this war ; and it was with an especial communication of great urgency that he had now demanded his secret audience with the leader of the military force of the valley.

"Thou hast affairs of moment to deal with, Captain Heathcoté," said the hard-riding traveller, when he found himself alone with Content. "The orders of his Honor are to spare neither whip nor spur, until the chief men of the borders shall be warned of the actual situation of the colony."

"Hath aught of moving interest occurred that his Honor deemeth there is necessity for unusual watchfulness? We had hoped that the prayers of the pious were not in vain ; and that a time of quiet was about to succeed to that violence, of which, bounden by our social covenants, we have unhappily been unwilling spectators. The bloody assault of Pettyquamscott hath exercised our minds severely—nay, it hath even raised doubts of the lawfulness of some of our deeds."

"Thou hast a commendable spirit of forgiveness, Captain Heathcote, or thy memory would extend to other scenes than those which bear relation to the punishment of an enemy so remorseless. It is said on the river, that the valley of Wish-Ton-Wish hath been visited by the savage in its day, and men speak freely of the wrongs suffered by its owners on that pitiless occasion."

"The truth may not be denied, even that good should come thereof. It is certain that much suffering was inflicted on me and on mine, by the inroad of which you speak ; nevertheless we have ever striven to consider it as a merciful chastisement inflicted for manifold sins, rather than as a subject that might be remembered, in order to stimulate passions that, in all reason as in all charity, should slumber as much as a weak nature will allow."

"This is well, Captain Heathcote, and in exceeding conformity with the most received doctrines," returned the stranger, slightly gaping, either from want of rest the previous night, or from disinclination to so grave a subject ; "but it hath little connection with present duties. My charge beareth especial concern with the further destruction of the Indians, rather than to any inward searchings into the condition of our own mental misgivings, concerning any right it may be thought proper to question, that hath a reference to the duty of self-protection. There is no unworthy dweller in the Connecticut Colony, sir, that hath endeavored more to cultivate a tender conscience than the wretched sinner who standeth before you ; for I have the exceeding happiness to sit under the outpourings of a spirit that hath few mortal superiors in the matter of precious gifts. I now speak of Dr. Calvin Pope ; a most worthy and soul-quieting divine ; one who spareth not the goad when the conscience needeth pricking, nor hesitateth to dispense consolation to him who seeth his fallen estate ; and one that never faileth to deal with charity, and humbleness of spirit, and forbearance with the failings of friends, and forgiveness of enemies, as the chiefest signs of a renovated moral existence ; and therefore, there can be but little reason to distrust the spiritual rightfulness of all that listen to the riches of his discourse. But when it cometh to be question of life or death, a matter of dominion and possession of these fair lands, that the Lord hath given—why, sir, then I say that, like the Israelites dealing with the sinful occupants of Canaan, it behoveth us to be true to each other, and to look upon the heathen with a distrustful eye."

"There may be reason in that thou utterest," observed Content, sorrowfully. "Still it is lawful to mourn even the necessity which conduceth to all this strife. I had hoped that they who direct the Councils of the Colony might have resorted to less violent means of persuasion, to lead the savage back to reason, than that which com-

eth from the armed hand. Of what nature is thy special errand?"

"Of deep urgency, sir, as will be seen in the narration," returned the other, dropping his voice like one habitually given to the dramatic part of diplomacy, however unskillful he might have been in its more intellectual accomplishments. "Thou wast in the Pettyquamscott scourging, and need not be reminded of the manner in which the Lord dealt with our enemies on that favor-dispensing day; but it may not be known to one so remote from the stirring and daily transactions of Christendom, in what manner the savage hath taken the chastisement. The restless and still unconquered Conanchet hath deserted his towns and taken refuge in the open woods; where it exceedeth the skill and usage of our civilized men of war, to discover, at all times, the position and force of their enemies. The consequences may be easily conjectured. The savage hath broken in upon, and laid waste, in whole or in part, firstly—Lancaster, on the tenth," counting on his fingers, "when many were led into captivity; secondly, Marlborough, on the twentieth; on the thirteenth ultimo, Groton; Warwick, on the seventeenth; and Rehoboth, Chelmsford, Andover, Weymouth, and divers other places, have been greatly sufferers, between the latter period and the day when I quitted the abode of his Honor. Pierce, of Scituate, a stout warrior, and one practised in the wiles of this nature of warfare, hath been cut off with a whole company of followers; and Wadsworth and Brockleband, men known and esteemed for courage and skill, have left their bones in the woods, sleeping in common among their luckless followers."

"These are truly tidings to cause us to mourn over the abandoned condition of our nature," said Content, in whose meek mind there was no affectation of regrets on such a subject. "It is not easy to see in what manner the evil may be arrested without again going forth to do battle."

"Such is the opinion of his Honor, and of all who sit with him in Council; for we have sufficient knowledge of the proceedings of the enemy, to be sure that the master-spirit of wickedness, in the person of him called Philip, is raging up and down the whole extent of the borders, awakening the tribes to what he calleth the necessity of resisting further aggression, and stirring up their vengeance by divers subtle expedients of malicious cunning."

"And what manner of proceeding hath been ordered in so urgent a strait by the wisdom of our rulers?"

"First, there is a fast ordained, that we come to the duty as men purified by mental struggle and deep self-examination; secondly, it is recommended that the congregations deal with more than wonted severity with all backsliders and evil-doers, in order that the towns may not fall under the Divine displeasure, as happened to them that dwelt in the devoted cities of Canaan; thirdly, it is determined to lend our feeble aid to the ordering of Providence, by calling forth the allotted number of the trained bands; and fourthly, it is contemplated to counteract the seeds of vengeance, by setting a labor-earning price on the heads of our enemies."

"I accord with the three first of these expedients, as the known and lawful resorts of Christian men," said Content. "But the latter seemeth a measure that needeth to be entertained with great wariness of manner, and some distrust of purpose."

"Fear not, since all suiting and economical discretion is active in the minds of our rulers, who have pondered sagaciously on so grave a policy. It is not intended to offer more than half the reward that is held forth by our more wealthy and elder sister of the bay; and there is some acute question about the necessity of bidding at all for any of tender years. And now, Captain Heathcote, with the good leave of so respectable a subject, I will proceed to lay before you the details of the number and the nature of the force that it is hoped you will lead in person in the ensuing campaign."

As the result of that which followed will be seen in the course of the legend, it is not necessary to accompany the messenger any further in his communication. We shall therefore leave him and Content busied with the matter of their conference, and proceed to give some account of the other personages connected with our subject.

When interrupted, as already related, by the arrival of the stranger, Faith had endeavored by a new expedient to elicit some evidences of a more just remembrance from the dull mind of her brother. Accompanied by most of the dependents of the family, she had led him to the summit of that hill which was now crowned with the foliage of a young and thrifty orchard, and placing him at the foot of the ruin, she tried to excite a train of recollections that should lead to deeper impressions, and possibly, by their

aid, to a discovery of the important circumstance that all so much longed to have explained.

The experiment proved no happy result. The place, and indeed the whole valley, had undergone so great a change, that one more liberally gifted might have hesitated to believe them those that have been described in our earlier pages. This rapid alteration of objects, which elsewhere know so little change in a long course of ages, is a fact familiar to all who reside in the newer districts of the Union. It is caused by the rapid improvements that are made in the first stages of a settlement. To fell the forest alone, is to give an entirely new aspect to the view ; and it is far from easy to see in a village and in cultivated fields, however recent the existence of the one or imperfect the other, any traces of a spot that a short time before was known as the haunt of the wolf, or the refuge of the deer.

The features, and more particularly the eye of his sister, had stirred long-dormant recollections in the mind of Whittal Ring ; and though these glimpses of the past were detached and indistinct, they had sufficed to quicken that ancient confidence which was partially exhibited in their opening conference. But it exceeded his feeble powers to recall objects that would appeal to no very lively sympathies, and which had themselves undergone so material alterations. Still the witless youth did not look on the ruin entirely without some strivings of his nature. Although the sward around its base was lively in the brightest verdure of early summer, and the delicious odor of the wild clover saluted his senses, still there was that in the blackened and ragged walls, the position of the tower, and the view of the surrounding hills, shorn as so much of them now were, that evidently spoke to his earliest impressions. He looked at the spot as a hound gazes at a master who has been so long lost as even to deaden his instinct ; and at times, as his companions endeavored to aid his faint images, it would seem as if memory were likely to triumph, and all those deceptive opinions which habit and Indian wiles had drawn over his dull mind, were about to vanish before the light of reality. But the allurements of a life in which there was so much of the freedom of nature mingled with the fascinating pleasures of the chase and of the woods, were not to be dispossessed so readily. When Faith artfully led him back to those animal enjoyments of which he had been so fond in boyhood,

the fantasy of her brother seemed most to waver; but whenever it became apparent that the dignity of a warrior, and all the more recent and far more alluring delights of his later life, were to be abandoned ere his being could return into its former existence, his dull faculties obstinately refused to lend themselves to a change that, in his case, would have been little short of that attributed to the transmigration of souls.

After an hour of anxious, and frequently, on the part of Faith, of angry efforts to extract some evidences of his recollection of the condition of life to which he had once belonged, the attempt for the moment was abandoned. At times, it seemed as if the woman were about to prevail. He often called himself Wittal, but he continued to insist that he was also Nipset, a man of the Narragansetts, who had a mother in his wigwam, and who had reason to believe that he should be numbered among the warriors of his tribe ere the fall of another snow.

In the meantime, a very different scene was passing at the place where the first examination had been held, and which had been immediately deserted by most of the spectators, on the sudden arrival of the messenger. But a solitary individual was seated at the spacious board, which had been provided alike for those who owned and presided over the estate, and for their dependents to the very meanest. The individual who remained had thrown himself into a seat, less with the air of him who consults the demands of appetite, than of one whose thoughts were so engrossing as to render him indifferent to the situation or employment of his more corporeal part. His head rested on his arms, the latter effectually concealing the face, as they were spread over the plain but exquisitely neat table of cherry-wood, which, by being placed at the side of one of less costly material, was intended to form the only distinction between the guests, as, in more ancient times and in other countries, the salt was known to mark the difference in rank among those who partook of the same feast.

"Mark," said a timid voice at his elbow, "thou art weary with this night-watching, and with the scouting on the hills. Dost not think of taking food before seeking thy rest?"

"I sleep not," returned the youth, raising his head, and gently pushing aside the basin of simple food that was offered by one whose eye looked feelingly on his flushed features, and whose suffused cheek perhaps betrayed there

was a secret consciousness that the glance was kinder than maiden diffidence should allow. "I sleep not, Martha, nor doth it seem to me that I shall ever sleep again."

"Thou frightest me by this wild and unhappy eye. Hast suffered aught in the march on the mountains?"

"Dost think one of my years and strength unable to bear the weariness of a few hours' watching in the forest? The body is well, but the mind endureth grievously."

"And wilt not say what causeth this vexation? Thou knowest, Mark, that there are none in this dwelling—nay, I am certain, I might add in this valley, that do not wish thee happiness."

"'Tis kind to say it, good Martha; but thou never hadst a sister!"

"'Tis true, I am all of my race; and yet to me it seemeth that no tie of blood could have been nearer than the love I bore to her who is lost."

"Nor mother! Thou never knewest what 'tis to reverence a parent."

"And is not thy mother mine?" answered a voice that was deeply melancholy, and yet so soft that it caused the young man to gaze intently at his companion, for a moment, ere he again spoke.

"True, true," he said hurriedly. "Thou must and dost love her who hath nursed thy infancy, and brought thee, with care and tenderness, to so fair and happy a womanhood." The eye of Martha grew brighter, and the color of her healthful cheek deepened, as Mark unconsciously uttered this simple commendation of her appearance; but as she shrank, with female sensitiveness, from his observation, the change was unnoticed, and he continued: "Thou seest that my mother is drooping hourly under this sorrow for our little Ruth; and who can say what may be the end of a grief that endureth so long?"

"'Tis true that there hath been reason to fear much in her behalf; but, of late, hope hath gotten the better of apprehension. Thou dost not well, nay, I am not assured thou dost not evil, to permit this discontent with Providence, because thy mother yieldeth to a little more than her usual mourning, on account of the unexpected return of one so nearly connected with her that we have lost."

"'Tis not that, girl—'tis not that!"

"If thou refuseth to say what 'tis that giveth thee this pain, I can do little more than pity."

"Listen, and I will say. It is now many years, as thou

knowest, since the savage Mohawk or Narragansett, Pequod or Wampanoag, broke in upon our settlement, and did his vengeance. We were then children, Martha ; and 'tis as a child that I have thought of that merciless burning. Our little Ruth was, like thyself, a blooming infant of some seven or eight years ; and I know not how the folly hath beset me, but it hath been ever as one of that innocence and age, that I have continued to think of my sister."

"Surely thou knowest that time cannot stay ; the greater therefore is the reason that we should be industrious to improve——"

"'Tis what our duty teacheth. I tell thee, Martha, that at night, when dreams come over me, as they sometimes will, and I see our Ruth wandering in the forest, it is as a playful, laughing child, such as we knew her ; and even while waking, do I fancy my sister at my knee, as she was wont to stand when listening to those idle tales with which we lightened our childhood."

"But we had our birth in the same year and month—dost think of me too, Mark, as one of that childish age?"

"Of thee ! That cannot well be. Do I not see that thou art grown into the condition of a woman, that thy little tresses of brown have become the jet black and flowing hair that becomes thy years, and that thou hast the stature—and, I say it not in idleness of speech, Martha, for thou knowest my tongue is no vain flatterer—but do I not see that thou hast grown into all the excellence of a most comely maiden ? But 'tis not thus, or rather 'twas not thus, with her we mourn ; for till this hour have I ever pictured my sister the little innocent we sported with, that gloomy night she was snatched from our arms by the cruelty of the savage."

"And what hath changed this pleasing image of our Ruth ?" asked his companion, half-covering her face to conceal the still deeper glow of female gratification which had been kindled by the words just heard. "I often think of her as thou hast described, nor do I now see why we may not still believe her, if she yet live, all that we could desire to see."

"That cannot be. The delusion is gone, and in its place a frightful truth has visited me. Here is Whittal Ring, whom we lost a boy ; thou seest he is returned a man, and a savage ! No, no ; my sister is no longer the child I loved to think her, but one grown into the estate of womanhood."

"Thou thinkest of her unkindly, while thou thinkest of

others far less endowed by nature with too much indulgence ; for thou rememberest, Mark, she was ever of more pleasing aspect than any that we knew."

"I know not that—I say not that—I think not that. But be she what hardships and exposure may have made her, still must Ruth Heathcote be far too good for an Indian wigwam. Oh ! 'tis horrible to believe that she is the bondwoman, the servitor, the wife of a savage !"

Martha recoiled, and an entire minute passed, during which she made no reply. It was evident that the revolting idea for the first time crossed her mind, and all the natural feelings of gratified and maiden pride vanished before the genuine and pure sympathies of a female bosom.

"This cannot be," she at length murmured—"it can never be ! Our Ruth must still remember the lessons taught her in her infancy. She knoweth she is born of Christian lineage ! of reputable name ! of exalted hope ! of glorious promise !"

"Thou seest by the manner of Whittal, who is of greater age, how little of that taught can withstand the wily savage."

"But Whittal faileth of Nature's gifts ; he hath ever been below the rest of men in understanding."

"And yet to what degree of Indian cunning hath he already attained."

"But Mark," rejoined his companion timidly, as if, while she felt all its force, she only consented to urge the argument in tenderness to the harassed feelings of the brother, "we are of equal years ; that which hath happened to me, may well have been the fortune of our Ruth."

"Dost mean, that being unespoused thyself, or that having at thy years inclinations that are free, my sister may have escaped the bitter curse of being the wife of a Narragansett, or what is not less frightful, the slave of his humors ?"

"Truly, I mean little else than the former."

"And not the latter," continued the young man, with a quickness that showed some sudden revolution in his thoughts. "But though with opinions that are decided, and with kindness awakened in behalf of one favored, thou hesitatest, Martha, it is not like that a girl left in the fetters of savage life would so long pause to think. Even here in the settlements all are not difficult of judgment as thou !"

The long lashes vibrated above the dark eyes of the

maiden, and for an instant it seemed as if she had no intention to reply. But looking timidly aside, she answered in a voice so low, that her companion scarcely gathered the meaning of that she uttered.

"I know not how I may have earned this false character among my friends," she said; "for to me it ever seemeth that what I feel and think is but too easily known."

"Then is the smart gallant from the Hartford town, who cometh and goeth so often between this distant settlement and his father's house, better assured of his success than I had thought. He will not journey the long road much oftener alone!"

"I have angered thee, Mark, or thou wouldst not speak with so cold an eye to one who hath ever lived with thee in kindness."

"I do not speak in anger, for 'twould be both unreasonable and unmanly to deny all of thy sex right of choice; but yet it doth seem right that when taste is suited and judgment appeased, there should be little motive for withholding speech."

"And wouldst thou have a maiden of my years in haste to believe that she was sought, when haply it may be that he of whom you speak is in quest of thy society and friendship, rather than of my favor?"

"Then might he spare much labor and some bodily suffering, unless he finds great pleasure in the saddle; for I know not a youth in the Connecticut Colony for whom I have smaller esteem. Others may see matter of approval in him, but to me, he is of bold speech, ungainly air, and great disagreeableness of discourse."

"I am happy that at last we find ourselves of one mind; for that thou sayest of the youth, is much as I have long considered him."

"Thou! Thou thinkest of the gallant thus! Then why dost listen to his suit? I had believed thee a girl too honest, Martha, to affect such niceties of deception. With this opinion of his character why not refuse his company?"

"Can a maiden speak too hastily?"

"And if here, and ready to ask thy favor, the answer would be——"

"No!" said the girl, raising her eyes for an instant, and bashfully meeting the eager look of her companion, though she uttered the monosyllable firmly.

Mark seemed bewildered. An entirely new and a novel idea took possession of his brain. The change was ap-

parent by his altering countenance, and a cheek that glowed like flame. What he might have said, most of our readers over fifteen may presume; but at that moment the voices of those who had accompanied Whittal to the ruin were heard on their return, and Martha glided away so silently as to leave him for a moment ignorant of her absence.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Oh! when amid the throngs of men
The heart grows sick of hollow mirth,
How willingly we turn us, then,
Away from this cold earth;
And look into thy azure breast,
For seats of innocence and rest!”—BRYANT'S *Skies*.

THE day was the Sabbath. This religious festival, which is even now observed in most of the States of the Union with a strictness that is little heeded in the rest of Christendom, was then revered with a severity suited to the austere habits of the colonists. The circumstance that one should journey on such a day, had attracted the observation of all in the hamlet; but as the stranger had been seen to ride toward the dwelling of the Heathcotes, and the times were known to teem with more than ordinary interest to the province, it was believed that he found his justification in some apology of necessity. Still none ventured forth to inquire into the motive of this extraordinary visit. At the end of an hour the horseman was seen to depart as he had arrived, seemingly urged on by the calls of some pressing emergency. He had in truth proceeded further with his tidings, though the lawfulness of discharging even this imperious duty on the Sabbath had been gravely considered in the Councils of those who had sent him. Happily they had found, or thought they had found, in some of the narratives of the sacred volume, a sufficient precedent to bid their messenger proceed.

In the meantime the unusual excitement which had been so unexpectedly awakened in the dwelling of the Heathcotes, began to subside in that quiet which is in so beautiful accordance with the sacred character of the day. The sun rose bright and cloudless over the hills, every vapor of the past night melting before his genial warmth into the invisible element. The valley then lay in that species of

holy calm which conveys so sweet and so forcible an appeal to the heart. The world presented a picture of the glorious handiwork of Him who seems to invite the gratitude and adoration of his creatures. To the mind yet untainted, there is exquisite loveliness and even godlike repose in such a scene. The universal stillness permits the softest natural sounds to be heard ; and the buzz of the bee or the wing of the humming-bird reaches the ear like the loud notes of a general anthem. This temporary repose is full of meaning. It should teach how much of the beauty of this world's enjoyments, how much of its peace, and even how much of the comeliness of nature itself, is dependent on the spirit by which we are actuated. When man reposes, all around him seems anxious to contribute to his rest ; and when he abandons the contentions of grosser interests, to elevate his spirit, all living things appear to unite in worship. Although this apparent sympathy of nature may be less true than imaginative, its lesson is not destroyed, since it sufficiently shows that what man chooses to consider good in this world is good, and that most of its strife and deformities proceed from his own perversity.

The tenants of the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish were little wont to disturb the quiet of the Sabbath. Their error lay in the other extreme, since they impaired the charities of life by endeavoring to raise man altogether above the weakness of his nature. They substituted the revolting aspect of a sublimated austerity, for that gracious though regulated exterior, by which all in the body may best illustrate their hopes or exhibit their gratitude. The peculiar air of those of whom we write, was generated by the error of the times and of the country, though something of its singularly rigid character might have been derived from the precepts and example of the individual who had the direction of the spiritual interests of the parish. As this person will have further connection with the matter of the legend, he shall be more familiarly introduced in its pages.

The Reverend Meek Wolfe, was, in spirit, a rare combination of the humblest self-abasement and of fierce spiritual denunciation. Like so many others of his sacred calling in the colony he inhabited, he was not only the descendant of a line of priests, but it was his greatest earthly hope that he should also become the progenitor of a race in whom the ministry was to be perpetuated as severely as if the regulated formula of the Mosaic dispensation

were still in existence. He had been educated in the infant college of Harvard, an institution that the emigrants from England had the wisdom and enterprise to found within the first five-and-twenty years of their colonial residence. Here this scion of so pious and orthodox a stock had abundantly qualified himself for the intellectual warfare of his future life, by regarding one set of opinions so steadily, as to leave little reason to apprehend he would ever abandon the most trifling outworks of his faith. No citadel ever presented a more hopeless curtain to the besieger, than did the mind of this zealot to the efforts of conviction; for on the side of his opponents, he contrived that every avenue should be closed by a wall blank as indomitable obstinacy could oppose. He appeared to think that all the minor conditions of argument and reason had been disposed of by his ancestors, and that it only remained for him to strengthen the many defences of his subject, and now and then to scatter by a fierce sortie the doctrinal skirmishers who might occasionally approach his parish. There was a remarkable singleness of mind in this religionist, which, while it in some measure rendered even his bigotry respectable, greatly aided in clearing the knotty subject with which he dealt, of much embarrassing matter. In his eyes, the straight and narrow path would hold but few, besides his own flock. He admitted some fortuitous exceptions, in one or two of the nearest parishes, with whose clergymen he was in the habit of exchanging pulpits; and perhaps, here and there, in a saint of the other hemisphere, or of the more distant towns of the Colonies, the brightness of whose faith was something aided, in his eyes, by distance, as this opaque globe of ours is thought to appear a ball of light to those who inhabit its satellite. In short, there was an admixture of seeming charity with an exclusiveness of hope, an unweariness of exertion with a coolness of exterior, a disregard of self with the most complacent security, and an uncomplaining submission to temporal evils with the loftiest spiritual pretensions, that in some measure rendered him a man as difficult to comprehend as to describe.

At an early hour in the forenoon, a little bell that was suspended in an awkward belfry perched on the roof of the meeting-house, began to summon the congregation to the place of worship. The call was promptly obeyed, and ere the first notes had reached the echoes of the hills, the wide and grassy street was covered with family groups, all taking

the same direction. Foremost in each little party walked the austere father, perhaps bearing on his arms a suckled infant, or some child yet too young to sustain its own weight ; while at a decent distance followed the equally grave matron, casting oblique and severe glances at the little troop around her, in whom acquired habits had yet some conquests to obtain over the lighter impulses of vanity. Where there was no child to need support, or where the mother chose to assume the office of bearing her infant in person, the man was seen to carry one of the heavy muskets of the day ; and when his arms were otherwise employed, the stoutest of his boys served in the capacity of armor-bearer. But in no instance was this needful precaution neglected, the state of the province and the character of the enemy requiring that vigilance should mingle even with their devotions. There was no loitering on the path, no light and worldly discourse by the way, nor even any salutations, other than those grave and serious recognitions by hat and eye, which usage tolerated as the utmost limit of courtesy on the weekly festival.

When the bell changed its tone, Meek appeared from the gate of the fortified house where he resided, in quality of castellan, on account of its public character, its additional security, and the circumstance that his studious habits permitted him to discharge the trust with less waste of manual labor than it would cost the village were the responsible office confided to one of more active habits. His consort followed, but at even a greater distance than that taken by the wives of other men, as if she felt the awful necessity of averting even the remotest possibility of scandal from one of so sacred a profession. Nine offspring of various ages, and one female assistant, of years too tender to be a wife herself, composed the household of the divine ; and it was a proof of the salubrious air of the valley that all were present, since nothing but illness was ever deemed a sufficient excuse for absence from the common worship. As this little flock issued from the palisadoes, a female, in whose pale cheek the effects of recent illness might yet be traced, held open the gate for the entrance of Reuben Ring, and a stout youth, who bore the prolific consort of the former, with her bounteous gift, into the citadel of the village, a place of refuge that nothing but the undaunted resolution of the woman prevented her from occupying before, since more than half of the children of the valley had first seen the light within the security of its defences.

The family of Meek preceded him into the temple, and when the feet of the minister himself crossed its threshold, there was no human form visible without its walls. The bell ceased its monotonous and mournful note, and the tall, gaunt form of the divine moved through the narrow aisle to its usual post, with the air of one who had already more than half rejected the burden of bodily encumbrance. A searching and stern glance was thrown around, as if he possessed an instinctive power to detect all delinquents, and then seating himself, the deep stillness that always preceded the exercises, reigned in the place.

When the divine next showed his austere countenance to his expecting people, its meaning was expressive rather of some matter of worldly import, than of that absence of carnal interest with which he usually strove to draw near to his Creator in prayer.

"Captain Content Heathcote," he said, with grave severity, after permitting a short pause to awaken reverence, "there has one ridden through this valley on the Lord's day, making thy habitation his halting-place. Hath the traveller warranty for this disrespect of the Sabbath, and canst thou find sufficient reason in his motive, for permitting the stranger within thy gates to neglect the solemn ordinance delivered on the Mount?"

"He rideth on especial commission," answered Content, who had respectfully arisen when thus addressed by name; "for matter of grave interest to the well-being of the Colony is contained in the subject of his errand."

"There is naught more deeply connected with the well-being of man, whether resident in this colony or in more lofty empires, than reverence to God's declared will," returned Meek, but half-appeased by the apology. "It would have been expedient for one, who in common not only setteth so good an example himself, but who is also charged with the mantle of authority, to have looked with distrust into the pretences of a necessity that may be only seeming."

"The motive shall be declared to the people at a fitting moment; but it hath seemed more wise to retain the substance of the horseman's errand until worship hath been offered, without the alloy of temporal concerns."

"Therein hast thou acted discreetly; for a divided mind giveth but little joy above. I hope there is equal reason why all of thy household are not with thee in the temple?"

Notwithstanding the usual self-command of Content, he

did not revert to this subject without emotion. Casting a subdued glance at the empty seat where she whom he so much loved was wont to worship at his side, he said, in a voice that evidently struggled to maintain its customary equanimity—

“There has been powerful interest awakened beneath my roof this day, and it may be that the duty of the Sabbath has been overlooked by minds so exercised. If we have therein sinned, I hope He that looketh kindly on the penitent, will forgive! She of whom thou speakest, hath been shaken by the violence of griefs renewed; though willing in spirit, a feeble and sinking frame is not equal to support the fatigue of appearing here, even though it be the house of God.”

This extraordinary exercise of pastoral authority was uninterrupted, even by the breathings of the congregation. Any incident of an unusual character had attraction for the inhabitants of a village so remote; but here was deep, domestic interest, connected with breach of usage and indeed of law, and all heightened by that secret influence that leads us to listen with singular satisfaction to those emotions in others which it is believed to be natural to wish to conceal. Not a syllable that fell from the lips of the divine, or of Content—not a deep tone of severity in the former, nor a struggling accent of the latter, escaped the dullest ear in that assembly. Notwithstanding the grave and regulated air that was common to all, it is needless to say there was pleasure in the little interruption of this scene, which, however, was far from being extraordinary in a community where it was not only believed that spiritual authority might extend itself to the most familiar practices, but where few domestic interests were deemed so exclusive, or individual feelings considered so sacred, that a very large proportion of the whole neighborhood might not claim a right to participate largely in both. The Reverend Mr. Wolfe was appeased by the explanation, and after allowing a sufficient time to elapse, in order that the minds of the congregation should recover their tone, he proceeded with the regular services of the morning.

It is needless to recount the well-known manner of the religious exercises of the Puritans. Enough of their forms and of their substance has been transmitted to us to render both manner and doctrine familiar to most of our readers. We shall therefore confine our duty to a relation of such portions of the ceremonies—if that which sedulously avoid-

ed every appearance of form, can thus be termed—as have an immediate connection with the incidents.

The divine had gone through the short opening prayer, had read the passage of holy writ, had given out the verses of the psalm, and had joined in the strange nasal melody with which his flock endeavored to render it doubly acceptable, and had ended his long and fervent wrestling of the spirit in a colloquial petition of some forty minutes' duration, in which direct allusion had been made not only to the subject of his recent examination, but to divers other familiar interests of his parishioners, and all without any departure from the usual zeal on his own part, or of the customary attention and grave decorum on that of his people. But when, for the second time, he arose to read another song of worship and thanksgiving, a form was seen in the centre or principal aisle, that as well by its attire and aspect, as by the unusual and irreverent tardiness of its appearance, attracted general observation. Interruptions of this nature were unfrequent, and even the long practised and abstracted minister paused for an instant, ere he proceeded with the hymn, though there was a suspicion current among the more instructed of his parishioners, that the sonorous version was an effusion of his own muse.

The intruder was Whittal Ring. The witless young man had strayed from the abode of his sister, and found his way into that general receptacle, where most of the village was congregated. During his former residence in the valley, there had been no temple, and the edifice, its interior arrangements, the faces of those it contained, and the business on which they had assembled, appeared alike strangers to him. It was only when the people lifted up their voices in the song of praise, that some glimmerings of his ancient recollections were discoverable in his inactive countenance. Then, indeed, he betrayed a portion of the delight which powerful sounds can quicken, even in beings of his unhappy mental constitution. As he was satisfied, however, to remain in a retired part of the aisle, listening with dull admiration, even the grave Ensign Dudley, whose eye had once or twice seemed ominous of displeasure, saw no necessity for interference.

Meek had chosen for his text, on that day, a passage from the book of Judges; "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Midian seven years." With this text the subtle-minded divine dealt powerfully, entering largely

into the mysterious and allegorical allusions then so much in vogue. In whatever manner he viewed the subject, he found reason to liken the suffering, bereaved, and yet chosen dwellers of the Colonies, to the race of the Hebrews. If they were not set apart and marked from all others of the earth, in order that one mightier than man should spring from their loins, they were led into that distant wilderness, far from the temptations of licentious luxury, or the worldly-mindedness of those who built their structure of faith on the sands of temporal honors, to preserve the word in purity. As there appeared no reason on the part of the divine himself to distrust his construction of the words he had quoted, so it was evident that most of his listeners willingly lent their ears to so soothing an argument.

In reference to Midian, the preacher was far less explicit. That the great father of evil was in some way intended by this allusion, could not be doubted; but in what manner the chosen inhabitants of those regions were to feel his malign influence, was matter of more uncertainty. At times, the greedy ears of those who had long been wrought up into the impression that visible manifestations of the anger or of the love of Providence were daily presented to their eyes, were flattered with the stern joy of believing that the war which then raged around them was intended to put their moral armor to the proof, and that out of the triumph of their victories were to flow honor and security to the Church. Then came ambiguous qualifications, which left it questionable whether a return of the invisible powers, that had been known to be so busy in the provinces, were not the judgment intended. It is not to be supposed that Meek himself had the clearest mental intelligence on a point of this subtlety, for there was something of misty hallucination in the manner in which he treated it, as will be seen by his closing words.

"To imagine that Azazel regardeth the long suffering and steadfastness of a chosen people with a pleasant eye," he said, "is to believe that the marrow of righteousness can exist in the carrion of deceit. We have already seen his envious spirit raging in many tragical instances. If required to raise a warning beacon to your eyes, by which the presence of this treacherous enemy might be known, I should say, in the words of one learned and ingenious in this craftiness, that 'when a person, having full reason, doth knowingly and wittingly seek and obtain of the Devil, or

any other god besides the true God Jehovah, an ability to do or know strange things, which he cannot by his own human abilities arrive unto,' that then he may distrust his gifts and tremble for his soul. And, oh! my brethren, how many of ye cling at this very moment to those tragical delusions, and worship the things of the world, instead of fattening on the famine of the desert, which is the sustenance of them that would live forever! Lift your eyes upwards, my brethren——"

"Rather turn them to the earth!" interrupted a deep, authoritative voice from the body of the church; "there is present need of all your faculties to save life, and even to guard the tabernacle of the Lord!"

Religious exercises composed the recreation of the dwellers in that distant settlement. When they met in companies to lighten the load of life, prayer and songs of praise were among the usual indulgences of the entertainment. To them a sermon was like a gay scenic exhibition in other and vainer communities, and none listened to the word with cold and inattentive ears. In literal obedience to the command of the preacher, and sympathizing with his own action, every eye in the congregation had been turned toward the naked rafters of the roof, when the unknown tones of him who spoke broke the momentary delusion. It is needless to say that, by a common movement, they sought an explanation of this extraordinary appeal. The divine became mute, equally with wonder and with indignation.

A first glance was enough to assure all present, that new and important interests were likely to be awakened. A stranger of grave aspect, and of a calm but understanding eye, stood at the side of Whittal Ring. His attire was of the simple guise and homely materials of the country. Still he bore about his person enough of the equipments of one familiar with the wars of the eastern hemisphere, to strike the senses. His hand was armed with a shining broadsword, such as was then used by the cavaliers of England, and at his back was slung the short carbine of one who battled in the saddle. His mien was dignified and even commanding, and there was no second look necessary to show that he was an intruder of a character altogether different from the moping innocent at his side.

"Why is one of an unknown countenance come to disturb the worship of the temple?" demanded Meek, when astonishment permitted utterance. "Thrice hath this

holy day been profaned by the foot of the stranger, and well may it be doubted whether we live not under an evil agency."

"Arm, men of the Wish-Ton-Wish! arm, and to your defences!"

A cry arose without, that seemed to circle the whole valley; and then a thousand whoops rolled out of the arches of the forest, and appeared to meet in one hostile din above the devoted hamlet. These were sounds that had been too often heard, or too often described, not to be generally understood. A scene of wild confusion followed.

Each man, on entering the church, had deposited his arms at the door, and thither most of the stout borderers were now seen hastening, to resume their weapons. Women gathered their children to their sides, and the wails of horror and alarm were beginning to break through the restraints of habit.

"Peace!" exclaimed the pastor, seemingly excited to a degree above human emotion. "Ere we go forth, let there be a voice raised to our heavenly Father. The asking shall be as a thousand men of war battling in our behalf!"

The commotion ceased as suddenly as if a mandate had been issued from that place to which their petition was to be addressed. Even the stranger, who had regarded the preparations with a stern but anxious eye, bowed his head, and seemed to join in the prayer, with a devoted and confiding heart.

"Lord!" said Meek, stretching his meagre arms, with the palms of the hands open, high above the heads of his flock, "at thy bidding, we go forth; with thy aid, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us; with thy mercy, there is hope in heaven and on earth. It is for thy tabernacle that we shed blood; it is for thy word that we contend. Battle in our behalf, King of Kings! send thy heavenly legions to our succor, that the song of victory may be incense at thy altars, and a foul hearing to the ears of the enemy—Amen."

There was a depth in the voice of the speaker, a supernatural calmness in the tones, and so great a confidence in the support of the mighty ally implored, that the words went to every heart. It was impossible that Nature should not be powerful within, but a high and exciting enthusiasm began to lift the people far above its influence. Thus

awakened by an appeal to feelings that had never slumbered, and stimulated by all the moving interests of life, the men of the valley poured out of the temple in defence of person and fireside, and, as they believed, of religion and of God.

There was pressing necessity not only for this zeal, but for all the physical energies of the stoutest of their numbers. The spectacle that met the view on issuing into the open air, was one that might have appalled the hearts of warriors more practised, and have paralyzed the efforts of men less susceptible to the impressions of religious excitement.

Dark forms were leaping through the fields on the hill-sides ; and all adown the slopes that conducted to the valley armed savages were seen pouring madly forward, on their path of destruction and vengeance. Behind them, the brand and the knife had been already used ; for the log tenement, the stacks, and the out-buildings of Reuben Ring, and of several others who dwelt in the skirts of the settlement, were sending forth clouds of murky smoke, in which forked and angry flames were already flashing fiercely. But danger most pressed still nearer. A long line of fierce warriors was even in the meadows ; and in no direction could the eye be turned that it did not meet with the appalling proof that the village was completely surrounded by an overwhelming superiority of force.

"To the garrison !" shouted some of the foremost of those who first saw the nature and imminency of the danger, pressing forward themselves in the direction of the fortified house. "To the garrison or we are lost !"

"Hold !" exclaimed that voice which was so strange to the ears of most of those who heard it, but which spoke in a manner that by its compass and firmness commanded obedience. "With this mad disorder we are truly lost. Let Captain Content Heathcote come to my councils."

Notwithstanding the tumult and confusion which had now in truth begun to rage fearfully around him, the quiet and self-restrained individual to whom the legal and perhaps moral right to command belonged, had lost none of his customary composure. It was plain by the look of powerful amazement with which he had at first regarded the stranger on his sudden interruption of the service, and by the glances of secret intelligence and of recognition they exchanged, that they had met before. But this was no time for greetings or explanations, nor was that a scene

in which to waste the precious moments in useless contests about opinions.

"I am here," said he who was thus called for; "ready to lead whither thy prudence and experience shall point the way."

"Speak to thy people, and separate the combatants in three bodies of equal strength. One shall press forward to the meadows, and beat back the savage ere he encircle the palisadoed house; the second shall proceed with the feeble and tender in their flight to its covers; and with the third—but thou knowest that which I would do with the third. Hasten, or we lose all by tardiness."

It was perhaps fortunate that orders so necessary and so urgent were given to one little accustomed to superfluity of speech. Without offering either commendation or dissent, Content obeyed. Accustomed to his authority, and conscious of the critical situation of all that was dear, the men of the village yielded an obedience more prompt and effective than it is usual to meet in soldiers who are not familiar with habits of discipline. The fighting men were quickly separated into three bodies, consisting of rather more than a score of combatants in each. One, commanded by Eben Dudley, advanced at quick time toward the meadows in the rear of the fortress, that the whooping body of savages, who were already threatening to cut off the retreat of the women and children, should be checked; while another departed in a nearly opposite direction, taking the street of the hamlet, for the purpose of meeting those who advanced by the southern entrance of the valley. The third and last of these small but devoted bodies remained stationary, in attendance for more definite orders.

At the moment when the first of these little divisions of force was ready to move, the divine appeared in its front, with an air in which spiritual reliance on the purposes of Providence, and some show of temporal determination, were singularly united. In one hand he bore a Bible, which he raised on high as the sacred standard of his followers, and in the other he brandished a short broadsword, in a manner that proved there might be danger in encountering its blade. The volume was open, and at brief intervals the divine read in a high and excited voice such passages as accidentally met his eye, the leaves blowing about in a manner to produce a rather remarkable admixture of doctrine and sentiment. But to these trifling moral incon-

gruities, both the pastor and his parishioners were alike indifferent; their subtle mental exercises having given birth to a tendency of aptly reconciling all seeming discrepancies, as well as of accommodating the most abstruse doctrines to the more familiar interests of life.

"Israel and the Philistines had put their battle in array, army against army," commenced Meek, as the troop he led began its advance. Then reading at short intervals, he continued, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle."—"Oh house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; he is thy help and thy shield."—"Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man."—"Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not again."—"Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I, withal, escape."—"Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again."—"He that hateth me, hateth my father also."—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—"They have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."—"For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai——" Thus far the words of Meek were intelligible to those who remained, but distance soon confounded the syllables. Then naught was audible but the yells of the enemy, the tramp of the men who pressed in the rear of the priest, with a display of military pomp as formidable as their limited means would allow, and those clear high tones, which sounded in the ears and quickened the blood at the hearts of his followers as though they had been trumpet-blasts. In a few more minutes the little band was scattered behind the covers of the fields, and the rattling of fire-arms succeeded to the quaint and characteristic manner of their march.

While this movement was made in front, the party ordered to cover the village was not idle. Commanded by a sturdy yeoman, who filled the office of lieutenant, it advanced with less of religious display, but with equal activity, in the direction of the south; and the sounds of contention were quickly heard, proclaiming both the urgency of the measure and the warmth of the conflict.

In the meantime equal decision, though tempered by some circumstances of deep personal interest, was displayed by those who had been left in front of the church. As

soon as the band of Meek had got to such a distance as to promise security to those who followed, the stranger commanded the children to be led toward the fortified house. This duty was performed by the trembling mothers, who had been persuaded with difficulty to defer it until cooler heads should pronounce that the proper moment had come. A few of the women dispersed among the dwellings in quest of the infirm, while all the boys of proper age were actively employed in transporting indispensable articles from the village within the palisadoes. As these several movements were simultaneous, but a very few minutes elapsed between the time when the orders were issued and the moment when they were accomplished.

"I had intended that thou should'st have had the charge in the meadows," said the stranger to Content, when naught remained to be performed, but that which had been reserved for the last of the three little bands of fighting men. "But as the work proceedeth bravely in that quarter, we will move in company. Why doth this maiden tarry?"

"Truly, I know not, unless it may be of fear. There is an opening for thy passage into the fort, Martha, with others of thy sex."

"I will follow the fighters that are about to march to the rescue of them that remain in our habitation," said the girl, in a low but steady voice.

"And how know'st thou that such is the service intended for those here arrayed?" demanded the stranger, with a little show of displeasure that his military purposes should have been anticipated.

"I see it in the countenances of them that tarry," returned the other, gazing furtively towards Mark, who, posted in the little line, could with difficulty brook a delay which threatened his father's house, and those whom it held, with so much jeopardy.

"Forward!" cried the stranger. "Here is no leisure for dispute. Let the maiden take wisdom and hasten to the fort. Follow, men, stout of heart, or we come too late to the succor!"

Martha waited until the party had advanced a few paces, and then, instead of obeying the repeated mandate to consult her personal safety, she took the direction of the armed band.

"I fear me that 'twill exceed our strength," observed the stranger, who marched in front at the side of Content,

"to make good the dwelling, at so great distance from further aid."

"And yet the visitation will be heavy that shall drive us for a second time to the fields for a resting-place. In what manner didst get warning of this inroad?"

"The savages believed themselves concealed in the cunning place, where thou know'st that my eye had opportunity to overlook their artifices. There is a Providence in our least seeming calculations; an imprisonment of weary years hath its reward in this warning!"

Content appeared to acquiesce, but the situation of affairs prevented the discourse from becoming more minute.

As they approached the dwelling of the Heathcotes, better opportunity of observing the condition of things in and around the house was of course obtained. The position of the building would have rendered any attempt on the part of those in it to gain the fort, ere the arrival of assistance, desperately hazardous, since the meadows that lay between them were already alive with the ferocious warriors of the enemy. But it was evident that the Puritan, whose infirmities kept him within doors, entertained no such design; for it was shortly apparent that those within were closing and barring the windows of the habitation, and that other provisions for defence were in the course of active preparation. The feelings of Content, who knew that the house contained only his wife and father, with one female assistant, were excited to agony, as the party he commanded drew near on one side, at a distance about equal to that of a band of the enemy, who were advancing diagonally from the woods on the other. He saw the efforts of those so dear to him, as they had recourse to the means of security provided to repel the very danger which now threatened; and to his eyes it appeared that the trembling hands of Ruth had lost their power, when haste and confusion more than once defeated the object of her exertions.

"We must break and charge, or the savage will be too speedy!" he said, in tones that grew thick from breathing quicker than was wont, for one of his calm temperament. "See! they enter the orchard! In another minute they will be masters of the dwelling!"

But his companion marched with a firmer step, and looked with a cooler eye. There was in his gaze the understanding of a man practised in scenes of sudden

danger, and in his mien the authority of one accustomed to command.

"Fear not," he answered; "the art of old Mark Heathcote hath departed from him, or he still knoweth how to make good his citadel against a first onset. If we quit our order the superiority of concert will be lost, and being few in numbers defeat will be certain; but with this front, and a fitting steadiness, our march may not be repulsed. To thee, Captain Content Heathcote, it need not be told, that he who now counsels hath seen the strife of savages ere this hour."

"I know it well—but dost not see my Ruth laboring at the ill-fated shutter of the chamber? The woman will be slain in her heedlessness—for, hark! there beginneth the volley of the enemy!"

"No, 'tis he who led my troop in a far different warfare!" exclaimed the stranger, whose form grew more erect, and whose thoughtful and deeply-furrowed features assumed something like the stern pleasure which kindles in the soldier as the sounds of contention increase. "'Tis old Mark Heathcote, true to his breeding and his name! he hath let off the culverin upon the knaves! behold, they are already disposed to abandon one who speaketh so boldly, and are breaking through the fences to the left, that we may taste something of their quality. Now, bold Englishmen, strong of hand and stout of heart, you have training in your duty, and you shall not be wanting in example. You have wives and children at hand, looking at your deeds; and there is One above that taketh note of the manner in which you serve in this cause. Here is an opening for your skill; scourge the cannibals with the hand of death! On, on to the onset, and to victory!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Hect. Is this Achilles?

Achil. I am Achilles.

Hect. Stand fair, I pray thee: let me look on thee."

—*Troilus and Cressida.*

It may now be necessary to take a rapid glance at the situation of the whole combat, which had begun to thicken in different parts of the valley. The party led by Dudley

and exhorted by Meek, had broken its order on reaching the meadows behind the fort, and seeking the covers of the stumps and fences, it had thrown in its fire with good effect on the irregular band that had pressed into the fields. This decision quickly caused a change in the manner of the advance. The Indians took to covers in their turn, and the struggle assumed that desultory but dangerous character, in which the steadiness and resources of the individual are put to the severest trial. Success appeared to vacillate; the white men at one time widening the distance between them and their friends in the dwelling, and, at another, falling back as if disposed to seek the shelter of the palisades. Although numbers were greatly in favor of the Indians, weapons and skill supported the cause of their adversaries. It was the evident wish of the former to break in upon the little band that opposed their progress to the village, in and about which they saw that scene of hurried exertion which has already been described—a spectacle but little likely to cool the furious ardor of an Indian onset. But the wary manner in which Dudley conducted his battle, rendered this an experiment of exceeding hazard.

However heavy of intellect the ensign might appear on other occasions, the present was one every way adapted to draw out his best and most manly qualities. Of large and powerful stature, he felt in moments of strife a degree of confidence in himself, that was commensurate with the amount of physical force he wielded. To this hardy assurance was to be added no trifling portion of the sort of enthusiasm that can be awakened in the most sluggish bosoms, and which, like the anger of an even-tempered man, is only the more formidable from the usually quiet habits of the individual. Nor was this the first, by many, of Ensign Dudley's warlike deeds. Besides the desperate affair already related in these pages, he had been engaged in divers hostile expeditions against the aborigines, and on all occasions had he shown a cool head and a resolute mind.

There was pressing necessity for both these essential qualities in the situation in which the ensign now found himself. By properly extending his little force, and yet keeping it at the same time perfectly within supporting distance, by emulating the caution of his foes in consulting the covers, and by reserving a portion of his fire throughout the broken and yet well ordered line, the savages were finally beaten back, from stump to stump, from

hillock to hillock, and fence to fence, until they had fairly entered the margin of the forest. Further, the experienced eye of the borderer saw he could not follow. Many of his men were bleeding, and growing weaker as the wounds still flowed. The protection of the trees gave the enemy too great an advantage for their position to be forced, and destruction would have been the inevitable consequence of the close struggle which must have followed a charge. In this stage of the combat Dudley began to cast anxious and inquiring looks behind him. He saw that support was not to be expected, and he also saw with regret that many of the women and children were still busy transporting necessities from the village into the fort. Falling back to a better line of covers, and to a distance that materially lessened the danger of the arrows, the weapons used by quite two-thirds of his enemies, he awaited in sullen silence the proper moment to effect a further retreat.

It was while the party of Dudley stood thus at bay, that a fierce yell rang in the arches of the forest. It was an exclamation of pleasure, uttered in the wild manner of those people; as if the tenants of the woods were animated by some sudden and general impulse of joy. The crouching yeomen regarded each other in uneasiness, but seeing no sign of wavering in the steady mien of their leader, each man kept close, awaiting some further exhibition of the devices of their foes. Ere another minute had passed, two warriors appeared at the margin of the wood, where they stood apparently in contemplation of the different scenes that were acting in various parts of the valley. More than one musket was levelled with the intent to injure them, but a sign from Dudley prevented attempts that would most probably have been frustrated by the never-slumbering vigilance of a North American Indian.

There was, however, something in the air and port of these two individuals, that had its share in producing the forbearance of Dudley. They were evidently both chiefs, and of far more than usual estimation. As was common with the military leaders of the Indians, they were men also of large and commanding stature. Viewed at the distance from which they were seen, one seemed a warrior who had reached the meridian of his days, while the other had the lighter step and more flexible movement of a much briefer existence. Both were well armed, and, as

was usual with the people of their origin, on the war-path, they were clad only in the customary scanty covering of waist-cloths and leggings. The former, however, were of scarlet, and the latter were rich in the fringes and bright colors of Indian ornaments. The elder of the two wore a gay belt of wampum around his head in the form of a turban; but the younger appeared with a shaven crown, on which nothing but the customary chivalrous scalp-lock was visible.

The consultation, like most of the incidents that have been just related, occupied but a very few minutes. The eldest of the chiefs issued some orders. The mind of Dudley was anxiously endeavoring to anticipate their nature, when the two disappeared together. The ensign would now have been left entirely to vague conjectures, had not the rapid execution of the mandates that had been issued to the youngest of the Indians, soon left him in no doubt of their intentions. Another loud and general shout drew his attention toward the right; and when he had endeavored to strengthen his position by calling three or four of the best marksmen to that end of his little line, the youngest of the chiefs was seen bounding across the meadow, leading a train of whooping followers to the covers that commanded its opposite extremity. In short, the position of Dudley was completely turned; and the stumps and angles of the fences which secreted his men, were likely to become of no further use. The emergency demanded decision. Collecting his yeomen ere the enemy had time to profit by his advantage, the ensign ordered a rapid retreat toward the fort. In this movement he was favored by the formation of the ground, a circumstance that had been well considered on the advance; and in a very few minutes the party found itself safely posted under the protection of a scattering fire from the palisadoes, which immediately checked the pursuit of the whooping and exulting foe. The wounded men, after a stern or rather sullen halt, that was intended to exhibit the unconquerable determination of the whites, withdrew into the works for succor, leaving the command of Dudley reduced by nearly one-half of its numbers. With this diminished force, however, he promptly turned his attention toward the assistance of those who combated at the opposite extremity of the village.

Allusion has already been made to the manner in which the houses of a new settlement were clustered near each

other, at the commencement of the colonial establishments. In addition to the more obvious and sufficient motive, which has given rise to the same inconvenient and unpicturesque manner of building over nine-tenths of the continent of Europe, there had been found a religious inducement for conforming to the custom. One of the enactments of the Puritans said, that "no man shall set his dwelling-house above the distance of half-a-mile, or a mile at farthest, from the meeting of the congregation where the church doth usually assemble for the worship of God." "The support of the worship of God, in church fellowship," was the reason alleged for this arbitrary provision of the law; but it is quite probable that support against danger of a more temporal character was another motive. There were those within the fort who believed the smoking piles that were to be seen, here and there, in the clearings on the hills, owed their destruction to a disregard of that protection which was thought to be yielded to those who leaned with the greatest confidence, even in the forms of earthly transactions, on the sustaining power of an all-seeing and all-directing Providence. Among this number was Reuben Ring, who submitted to the loss of his habitation, as to a merited punishment for the light-mindedness that had tempted him to erect a dwelling at the utmost limits of the prescribed distance.

As the party of Dudley retreated, that sturdy yeoman stood at a window of the chamber in which his prolific partner with her recent gift were safely lodged, for in that moment of confusion the husband was compelled to discharge the double duty of sentinel and nurse. He had just fired his piece, and he had reason to think with success, on the enemies that pressed too closely on the retiring party, and as he reloaded the gun, he turned a melancholy eye on the pile of smoking embers, that now lay where his humble but comfortable habitation had so lately stood.

"I fear me, Abundance," he said, shaking his head with a sigh, "that there was error in the measurement between the meeting and the clearing. Some misgivings of the lawfulness of stretching the chain across the hollows, came over me at the time; but the pleasant knoll, where the dwelling stood, was so healthful and commodious, that, if it were a sin, I hope it is one that is forgiven! There doth not seem so much as the meanest of its logs, that is not now melted into white ashes by the fire!"

"Raise me, husband," returned the wife, in the weak

voice natural to her feeble situation ; "raise me with thine arm, that I may look upon the place where my babes first saw the light."

Her request was granted, and, for a minute, the woman gazed in mute grief at the destruction of her comfortable home. Then, as a fresh yell from the foe rose on the air without, she trembled, and turned with a mother's care toward the unconscious beings that slumbered at her side.

"Thy brother hath been driven by the heathen to the foot of the palisadoes," observed the other, after regarding his companion with manly kindness for a moment, "and he hath lessened his force by many that are wounded."

A short but eloquent pause succeeded. The woman turned her tearful eyes upward, and stretching out a bloodless hand, she answered—

"I know what thou would'st do—it is not meet that Sergeant Ring should be a woman-tender, when the Indian enemy is in his neighbor's fields! Go to thy duty, and that which is to be done, do manfully! and yet would I have thee remember how many there are who lean upon thy life for a father's care."

The yeoman first cast a cautious look around him, for this the decent and stern usages of the Puritans exacted, and perceiving that the girl who had occasionally entered to tend the sick was not present, he stooped, and impressing his lips on the cheek of his wife, he threw a yearning look at his offspring, shouldered his musket, and descended to the court.

When Reuben Ring joined the party of Dudley, the latter had just issued an order to march to the support of those who still stoutly defended the southern entry of the village. The labor of securing necessities was not yet ended, and it was on every account an object of the last importance to make good the hamlet against the enemy. The task, however, was not as difficult as the force of the Indians might at first have given reason to believe. The conflict, by this time, had extended to the party which was headed by Content, and, in consequence, the Indians were compelled to contend with a divided force. The buildings themselves, with the fences and out-houses, were so many breastworks, and it was plain that the assailants acted with a caution and concert, that betrayed the direction of some mind more highly gifted than those which ordinarily fall to the lot of uncivilized men.

The task of Dudley was not so difficult as before, since the

enemy ceased to press upon his march, preferring to watch the movements of those who held the fortified house, of whose numbers they were ignorant, and of whose attacks they were evidently jealous. As soon as the reinforcement reached the lieutenant who defended the village, he commanded the charge, and his men advanced with shouts and clamor, some singing spiritual songs, others lifting up their voices in prayer, while a few availed themselves of the downright and perhaps equally effective means of raising sounds as fearful as possible. The whole being backed by spirited and well-directed discharges of musketry, the effort was successful. In a few minutes the enemy fled, leaving that side of the valley momentarily free from danger.

Pursuit would have been folly. After posting a few lookouts in secret and safe positions among the houses, the whole party returned, with an intention of cutting off the enemy who still held the meadows near the garrison. In this design, however, their intentions were frustrated. The instant they were pressed, the Indians gave way, evidently for the purpose of gaining the protection of the woods; and when the whites returned to their works, they were followed in a manner to show that they could make no further movement without the hazard of a serious assault. In this condition, the men in and about the fort were compelled to be inefficient spectators of the scene that was taking place around the "Heathcote-house," as the dwelling of old Mark was commonly called.

The fortified building had been erected for the protection of the village and its inhabitants, an object that its position rendered feasible; but it could offer no aid to those who dwelt without the range of the musketry. The only piece of artillery belonging to the settlement, was the culverin which had been discharged by the Puritan, and which served for the moment to check the advance of his enemies. But the exclamations of the stranger, and the appeal to his men, with which the last chapter closed, sufficiently proclaimed that the attack was diverted from the house, and that work of a bloody character now offered itself to those he and his companion led.

The ground around the dwelling of the Heathcotes admitted of closer and more deadly conflict than that on which the other portions of the combat had occurred. Time had given size to the orchards, and wealth had multiplied and rendered more secure the enclosures and out-

buildings. It was in one of the former that the hostile parties met, and came to that issue which the warlike stranger had foreseen.

Content, like Dudley, caused his men to separate, and they threw in their fire with the same guarded reservation that had been practised by the other party. Success again attended the efforts of discipline ; the whites gradually beating back their enemies, until there was a probability of forcing them entirely into the open ground in their rear, a success that would have been tantamount to a victory. But at this flattering moment, yells were heard behind the leaping and whooping band that was still seen gliding through the openings of the smoke, resembling so many dark and malignant spectres acting their evil rites. Then, as a chief with a turbaned head, terrific voice, and commanding stature, appeared in their front, the whole of the wavering line received an onward impulse. The yells redoubled ; another warrior was seen brandishing a tomahawk on one flank, and the whole of the deep phalanx came rushing in upon the whites, threatening to sweep them away, as the outbreking torrent carries desolation in its course.

"Men, to your square !" shouted the stranger, disregarding cover and life together, in such a pressing emergency ; "to your square, Christians, and be firm."

The command was repeated by Content, and echoed from mouth to mouth. But before those on the flanks could reach the centre, the shock had come. All order being lost, the combat was hand to hand, one party fighting fiercely for victory, and the other knowing that they stood at the awful peril of their lives. After the first discharge of the musket and the twang of the bow, the struggle was maintained with knife and axe ; the thrust of the former, or the descent of the keen and glittering tomahawk, being answered by sweeping and crushing blows of the musket's butt, or by throttling grasps of hands that were clenched in the death-gripe. Men fell on each other in piles, and when the conqueror rose to shake off the bodies of those who gasped at his feet, his frowning eye rested alike on friend and enemy. The orchard rang with yells of the Indians, but the colonists fought in mute despair. Sullen resolution only gave way with life ; and it happened more than once, that fearful day, that the usual reeking token of an Indian triumph was swung before the stern and still conscious eyes of the mangled victim from whose head it had been torn.

In this frightful scene of slaughter and ferocity, the principal personages of our legend were not idle. By a tacit but intelligent understanding, the stranger with Content and his son placed themselves back to back, and struggled manfully against their luckless fortune. The former showed himself no soldier of parade; for, knowing the uselessness of orders when each one fought for life, he dealt out powerful blows in silence. His example was nobly emulated by Content; and young Mark moved limb and muscle with the vigorous activity of his age. A first onset of the enemy was repelled, and for a moment there was a faint prospect of escape. At the suggestion of the stranger, the three moved in their order toward the dwelling, with the intention of trusting to their personal activity when released from the throng. But at this luckless instant, when hope was beginning to assume the air of probability, a chief came stalking through the horrible mêlée, seeking on each side some victim of his uplifted axe. A crowd of the inferior herd pressed at his heels, and a first glance told the assailed that the decisive moment had come.

At the sight of so many of their hated enemies still living and capable of suffering, a common and triumphant shout burst from the lips of the Indians. Their leader, like one superior to the more vulgar emotions of his followers, alone approached in silence. As the band opened and divided to encircle the victims, chance brought him face to face with Mark. Like his foe the Indian warrior was still in the freshness and vigor of young manhood. In stature, years, and agility, the antagonists seemed equal; and, as the followers of the chief threw themselves on the stranger and Content, like men who knew their leader needed no aid, there was every appearance of a fierce and doubtful struggle. But, while neither of the combatants showed any desire to avoid the contest, neither was in haste to give the commencing blow. A painter, or rather sculptor, would have seized the attitudes of these young combatants for a rich exhibition of the power of his art.

Mark, like most of his friends, had cast aside all superfluous vestments ere he approached the scene of strife. The upper part of his body was naked to the shirt, and even this had been torn asunder by the rude encounters through which he had already passed. The whole of his full and heaving chest was bare, exposing the white skin and blue veins of one whose fathers had come from to-

ward the rising sun. His swelling form rested on a leg that seemed planted in defiance, while the other was thrown in front like a lever to control the expected movements. His arms were extended to the rear, the hands grasping the barrel of a musket which threatened death to all who should come within its sweep. The head, covered with the short, curling, yellow hair of his Saxon lineage, was a little advanced above the left shoulder, and seemed placed in a manner to preserve the equipoise of the whole frame. The brow was flushed, the lips compressed and resolute, the veins of the neck and temples swollen nearly to bursting, and the eyes contracted, but of a gaze that bespoke equally the feelings of desperate determination and of entranced surprise.

On the other hand, the Indian warrior was a man still more likely to be remarked. The habits of his people had brought him, as usual, into the field with naked limbs and nearly uncovered body. The position of his frame was that of one prepared to leap; and it would have been a comparison tolerated by the license of poetry to have likened his straight and agile form to the semblance of a crouching panther. The projecting leg sustained the body, bending under its load more with the free play of muscle and sinew than from any weight, while the slightly stooping head was a little advanced beyond the perpendicular. One hand was clenched on the helve of an axe that lay in a line with the right thigh, while the other was placed with a firm gripe on the buck-horn handle of a knife that was still sheathed at his girdle. The expression of the face was earnest, severe, and perhaps a little fierce, and yet the whole was tempered by the immovable and dignified calm of a chief of high qualities. The eye, however, was gazing and riveted; and, like that of the youth whose life he threatened, it appeared singularly contracted with wonder.

The momentary pause that succeeded the movement by which the two antagonists threw themselves into these fine attitudes was full of meaning. Neither spoke, neither permitted play of muscle, neither even seemed to breathe. The delay was not like that of preparation, for each stood ready for his deadly effort, nor would it have been possible to trace in the compressed energy of the countenance of Mark, or in the lofty and more practised bearing of the front and eye of the Indian, anything like wavering of purpose. An emotion foreign to the scene appeared to possess them both, each active brain unconsciously accom-

modating itself to the bloody business of the hour, while the inscrutable agency of the mind held them for a brief interval in check.

A yell of death from the mouth of a savage who was beaten to the very feet of his chief by a blow of the stranger, and an encouraging shout from the lips of the latter, broke the short trance. The knees of the chief bent still lower, the head of the tomahawk was a little raised, the blade of the knife was seen glittering from its sheath, and the butt of Mark's musket had receded to the utmost tension of his sinews, when a shriek and a yell, different from any before heard that day, sounded near. At the same moment, the blows of both the combatants were suspended, though by the agency of very different degrees of force. Mark felt the arms of one cast around his limbs with a power sufficient to embarrass, though not to subdue him, while the well-known voice of Whittal Ring sounded in his ears—

“Murder the lying and hungry pale-faces! They leave us no food but air—no drink but water!”

On the other hand, when the chief turned in anger to strike the daring one who presumed to arrest his arm, he saw at his feet the kneeling figure, the uplifted hands, and agonized features of Martha. Averting the blow that a follower already aimed at the life of the suppliant, he spoke rapidly in his own language, and pointed to the struggling Mark. The nearest Indians cast themselves on the already half-captured youth. A whoop brought a hundred more to the spot, and then a calm as sudden, and almost as fearful, as the previous tumult prevailed in the orchard. It was succeeded by the long-drawn, frightful, and yet meaning yell by which the American warrior proclaims his victory.

With the end of the tumult in the orchard, the sounds of strife ceased in all the valley. Though conscious of the success of their enemies, the men in the fort saw the certainty of destruction, not only to themselves, but to those feeble ones whom they should be compelled to leave without a sufficient defence, were they to attempt a sortie to that distance from their works. They were, therefore, compelled to remain passive and grave spectators of an evil they had not the means to avert.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Were such things here, as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"—*Macbeth*.

AN hour later presented a different scene. Bands of the enemy, that in civilized warfare would be called parties of observation, lingered in the skirts of the forest nearest to the village; and the settlers still stood to their arms, posted among the buildings, or maintaining their array at the foot of the palisades. Though the toil of securing the valuables continued, it was evident that, as the first terrors of alarm had disappeared, the owners of the hamlet began to regain some assurance in their ability to make it good against their enemies. Even the women were now seen moving through its grassy street with greater seeming confidence, and there was a regularity in the air of the armed men, which denoted a determination that was calculated to impose on their wild and undisciplined assailants.

But the dwelling, the out-buildings, and all the implements of domestic comfort, which had so lately contributed to the ease of the Heathcotes, were completely in possession of the Indians. The open shutters and doors, the scattered and half-destroyed furniture, the air of devastation and waste, and the general abandonment of all interest in the protection of property, proclaimed the licentious disorder of a successful assault. Still the work of destruction and plunder did not go on. Although here and there might be seen some warrior, decorated, according to the humors of his savage taste, with the personal effects of the former inmates of the building, every hand had been checked, and the furious tempers of the conquerors had been quieted, seemingly by the agency of some unseen and extraordinary authority. The men, who so lately had been moved by the fiercest passions of our nature, were suddenly restrained, if not appeased; and, instead of that exulting indulgence of vengeance which commonly accompanies an Indian triumph, the warriors stalked about the buildings and through the adjacent grounds, in a silence which, though gloomy and sullen, was marked by their characteristic submission to events.

The principal leaders of the inroad, and all the surviv-

ing sufferers by the defeat, were assembled in the piazza of the dwelling. Ruth, pale, sorrowing, and mourning for others rather than for herself, stood a little apart, attended by Martha and the young assistant whose luckless fortune it was to be found at her post on this eventful day. Content, the stranger, and Mark, were near, subdued and bound, the sole survivors of all that band they had so recently led into the conflict. The gray hairs and bodily infirmities of the Puritan spared him the same degradation. The only other being present, of European origin, was Whittal Ring. The innocent stalked slowly among the prisoners, sometimes permitting ancient recollections and sympathies to come over his dull intellect, but oftener taunting the unfortunate with the injustice of their race, and with the wrongs of his adopted people.

The chiefs of the successful party stood in the centre, apparently engaged in some grave deliberation. As they were few in number, it was evident that the council only included men of the highest importance. Chiefs of inferior rank, but of great names in the limited renown of those simple tribes, conversed in knots among the trees, or paced the court at a respectful distance from the consultation of their superiors.

The least practised eye could not mistake the person of him on whom the greatest weight of authority had fallen. The turbaned warrior, already introduced in these pages, occupied the centre of the group, in the calm and dignified attitude of an Indian who hearkens to or who utters advice. His musket was borne by one who stood in waiting, while the knife and axe were returned to his girdle. He had thrown a light blanket, or it might be better termed a robe of scarlet cloth, over his left shoulder, whence it gracefully fell in folds, leaving the whole of the right arm free, and most of his ample chest exposed to view. From beneath this mantle, blood fell slowly in drops, dyeing the floor on which he stood. The countenance of this warrior was grave, though there was a quickness in the movements of an ever-restless eye, that denoted great mental activity, no less than the disquiet of suspicion. One skilled in physiognomy might too have thought, that a shade of suppressed discontent was struggling with the self-command of habits that had become part of the nature of the individual.

The two companions nearest this chief were, like himself, men past the middle age, and of mien and expression that were similar, though less strikingly marked ; neither show-

ing those signs of displeasure, which occasionally shot from organs that, in spite of a mind so trained and so despotic, could not always restrain their glittering brightness. One was speaking, and by his glance it was evident that the subject of his discourse was the fourth and last of their number, who had placed himself in a position that prevented his being an auditor of what was said.

In the person of the latter chief, the reader will recognize the youth who had confronted Mark, and whose rapid movement on the flank of Dudley had first driven the colonists from the meadows. The eloquent expression of limb, the tension of sinews, and the compression of muscles, as last exhibited, were now gone. They had given place to the peculiar repose that distinguishes the Indian warrior in his moments of inaction, quite as much as it marks the manner of one schooled in the forms of more polished life. With one hand he leaned lightly on a musket, while from the wrist of the other, which hung loose at his side, depended, by a thong of deer's sinew, a tomahawk from which fell drops of human blood. His person bore no other covering than that in which he had fought, and, unlike his more aged companion in authority, his body had escaped without a wound.

In form and in features, this young warrior might be deemed a model of the excellence of Indian manhood. The limbs were full, round, faultlessly straight, and distinguished by an appearance of extreme activity, without being equally remarkable for muscle. In the latter particular, in the upright attitude, and in the distant and noble gaze which so often elevated his front, there was a close affinity to the statue of the Pythian Apollo; while in the full though slightly effeminate chest, there was an equal resemblance to that look of animal indulgence which is to be traced in the severe representations of Bacchus. This resemblance, however, to a deity that is little apt to awaken lofty sentiments in the spectator, was not displeasing, since it in some measure relieved the sternness of an eye that penetrated like the glance of the eagle, and that might otherwise have left an impression of too little sympathy with the familiar weaknesses of humanity. Still the young chief was less to be remarked by this peculiar fulness of chest, the fruit of intervals of inaction, constant indulgence of the first wants of nature, and a total exemption from toil, than most of those, who either counselled in secret near, or paced the grounds about the building. In him, it was rather a point

to be admired than a blemish ; for it seemed to say, that notwithstanding the evidences of austerity which custom, and perhaps character, as well as rank, had gathered in his air, there was a heart beneath that might be touched by the charities of humanity. On the present occasion, the glances of his roving eye, though searching and full of meaning, were evidently weakened by an expression that betrayed a strange and unwonted confusion of mind.

The conference of the three was ended, and the warrior with a turbaned head advanced toward his captives, with the step of a man whose mind had come to a decision. As the dreaded chief drew near, Whittal retired, stealing to the side of the young warrior, in a manner that denoted greater familiarity, and perhaps greater confidence. A sudden thought lighted the countenance of the latter. He led the innocent to the extremity of the piazza, spoke low and earnestly, pointing to the forest, and when he saw that his messenger was already crossing the fields at the top of his speed, he moved with a calm dignity into the centre of the group, taking his station so near his friend, that the folds of the scarlet blanket brushed his elbow. Until this movement the silence was not broken. When the great chief felt the passage of the other, he glanced a look of hesitation at his friends, but resuming his former air of composure, he spoke :

“Man of many winters,” he commenced, in an English that was quite intelligible, while it betrayed a difficulty of speech we shall not attempt imitating, “why hath the Great Spirit made thy race like hungry wolves?—why hath a pale-face the stomach of a buzzard, the throat of a hound, and the heart of a deer? Thou hast seen many meltings of the snow ; thou rememberest the young tree a sapling. Tell me, why is the mind of a Yengeese so big, that it must hold all that lies between the rising and the setting sun? Speak, for we would know the reason why arms so long are found on so little bodies.”

The events of that day had been of a nature to awaken all the latent energies of the Puritan. He had lifted up his spirit, with the morning, in the customary warmth with which he ever hailed the Sabbath ; the excitement of the assault had found him sustained above most earthly calamities, and while it quickened feelings that can never become extinct in one who has been familiar with martial usages, it left him, stern in his manhood, and exalted in his sentiments of submission and endurance. Under such in-

fluences, he answered with an austerity that equalled the gravity of the Indian :

"The Lord hath delivered us into the bonds of the heathen," he said, "and yet his name shall be blessed beneath my roof ! Out of evil shall come good ; and from this triumph of the ignorant shall proceed an everlasting victory !"

The chief gazed intently at the speaker, whose attenuated frame, venerable face, and long locks, aided by the hectic of enthusiasm that played beneath a glazed and deep-set eye, imparted a character that seemed to rise superior to human weakness. Bending his head in superstitious reverence, he turned gravely to those who, appearing to possess more of the world in their natures, were more fitting subjects for the designs he meditated.

"The mind of my father is strong, but his body is like a branch of the scorched hemlock !" was the pithy declaration with which he prefaced his next remark. "Why is this ?" he continued, looking severely at the three who had so lately been opposed to him in deadly contest. "Here are men with skins like the blossom of the dog-wood, and yet their hands are so dark that I cannot see them !"

"They have been blackened by toil beneath a burning sun," returned Content, who knew how to discourse in the figurative language of the people in whose power he found himself. "We have labored, that our women and children might eat."

"No—the blood of red men hath changed their color."

"We have taken up the hatchet, that the land which the Great Spirit hath given might still be ours, and that our scalps might not be blown about in the smoke of a wigwam. Would a Narragansett hide his arms, and tie up his hands, with the war-whoop ringing in his ears ?"

When allusion was made to the ownership of the valley, the blood rushed into the cheek of the warrior in such a flood that it deepened even the natural swarthy hue ; but, clenching the handle of his axe convulsively, he continued to listen, like one accustomed to entire self-command.

"What a red man does may be seen," he answered, pointing with a grim smile toward the orchard ; exposing, by the movement of the blanket, as he raised his arm, two of the reeking trophies of victory attached to his belt. "Our ears are open very wide. We listen, to hear in what manner the hunting grounds of the Indian have become the ploughed fields of the Yengeese. Now let my wise men hearken, that they may grow more cunning, as the snows

settle on their heads. The pale men have a secret to make the black seem white!"

"Narragansett——"

"Wampanoag!" interrupted the chief, with the lofty air with which an Indian identifies himself with the glory of his people; then glancing a milder look at the young warrior at his elbow, he added, hastily, and in the tone of a courtier, "'tis very good—Narragansett or Wampanoag—Wampanoag or Narragansett. The red men are brothers and friends. They have broken down the fences between their hunting grounds, and they have cleared the paths between their villages of briers. What have you to say to the Narragansett?—he has not yet shut his ear."

"Wampanoag, if such be thy tribe," resumed Content, "thou shalt hear that which my conscience teacheth is language to be uttered. The God of an Englishman is the God of men of all ranks, and of all time." His listeners shook their heads doubtingly, with the exception of the youngest chief, whose eye never varied its direction while the other spoke, each word appearing to enter deep within the recesses of his mind. "In defiance of these signs of blasphemy, do I still proclaim the power of him I worship!" Content continued; "my God is thy God; and he now looketh equally on the deeds, and searcheth, with inscrutable knowledge, into the hearts of both. This earth is his footstool; yonder heaven his throne! I pretend not to enter into his sacred mysteries, or to proclaim the reason why one-half of his fair work hath been so long left in that slough of ignorance and heathenish abomination in which my fathers found it; why these hills never before echoed the songs of praise, or why the valleys have been so long mute. These are truths hid in the secret designs of his sacred purpose, and they may not be known until the last fulfilment. But a great and righteous spirit hath led hither men, filled with the love of truth and pregnant with the designs of a heavily-burdened faith, inasmuch as their longings are for things pure, while the consciousness of their transgressions bends them in deep humility to the dust. Thou bringest against us the charge of coveting thy lands, and of bearing minds filled with the corruption of riches. This cometh of ignorance of that which hath been abandoned, in order that the spirit of the godly might hold fast to the truth. When the Yengeese came into this wilderness, he left behind him all that can delight the eye, please the senses, and feed the longing of the human heart, in the

country of his fathers ; for fair as is the work of the Lord in other lands, there is none that is so excellent as that from which these pilgrims in the wilderness have departed. In that favored isle, the earth groaneth with the abundance of its products ; the odors of its sweet savors salute the nostrils, and the eye is never wearied in gazing at its loveliness. No ; the men of the pale-faces have deserted home, and all that sweeteneth life, that they might serve God ; and not at the instigations of craving minds or of evil vanities !”

Content paused—for as he grew warm with the spirit by which he was animated, he had insensibly strayed from the closer points of his subject. His conquerors maintained the decorous gravity with which an Indian always listens to the speech of another, until he had ended, and then the Great Chief, or Wampanoag, as he had proclaimed himself to be, laid a finger lightly on the shoulder of his prisoner, as he demanded—

“Why have the people of the Yengeese lost themselves on a blind path ? If the country they have left is pleasant, cannot their God hear them from the wigwams of their fathers ? See—if our trees are but bushes, leave them to the red man ; he will find room beneath their branches to lie in the shade. If our rivers are small, it is because the Indians are little. If the hills are low and the valleys narrow, the legs of my people are weary with much hunting, and they will journey among them the easier. Now what the Great Spirit hath made for a red man, a red man should keep. They whose skins are like the light of the morning, should go back toward the rising sun, out of which they have come to do us wrong.”

The chief spoke calmly ; but it was like a man much accustomed to deal in the subtleties of controversy, according to the fashion of the people to whom he belonged.

“God hath otherwise decreed,” said Content. “He hath led his servants hither, that the incense of praise may arise from the wilderness.”

“Your Spirit is a wicked Spirit. Your ears have been cheated. The counsel that told your young men to come so far, was not spoken in the voice of the Manitou. It came from the tongue of one that loves to see game scarce, and the squaws hungry. Go—you follow the mocker, or your hands would not be so dark.”

“I know not what injury may have been done the Wampanoags, by men of wicked minds ; for some such there

are, even in the dwellings of the well-disposed—but wrong to any hath never come from those that dwell within my doors. For these lands, a price hath been paid, and what is now seen of abundance in the valley, hath been wrought by much labor. Thou art a Wampanoag, and dost know that the hunting grounds of thy tribe have been held sacred by my people. Are not the fences standing which their hands placed, that not even the hoof of colt should trample the corn? and when was it known that the Indian came for justice against the trespassing ox, and did not find it?”

“The moose doth not taste the grass at the root—he liveth on the tree! He doth not stoop to feed on that which he treadeth under foot! Does the hawk look for the mosquito? His eye is too big. He can see a bird. Go—when the deer have been killed, the Wampanoags will break down the fence with their own hands. The arm of a hungry man is strong. A cunning pale-face hath made that fence; it shutteth out the colt, and it shutteth in the Indian. But the mind of a warrior is too big; it will not be kept at grass with the ox.”

A low but expressive murmur of satisfaction from the mouths of his grim companions, succeeded this reply of the chief.

“The country of thy tribe is far distant,” returned Content, “and I will not lay untruth to my soul, by presuming to say whether justice or injustice hath been done them in the partition of the lands. But in this valley hath wrong never been done to the red man. What Indian hath asked for food, and not got it? If he hath been a-thirst, the cider came at his wish; if he hath been a-cold, there was a seat by the hearth; and yet hath there been reason why the hatchet should be in my hand, and why my foot should be on the war-path! For many seasons we lived on lands which were bought of both red and white man, in peace. But though the sun shone clear so long, the clouds came at last. There was a dark night fell upon this valley, Wampanoag, and death and the brand entered my dwelling together. Our young men were killed, and—our spirits were sorely tried.”

Content paused—for his voice became thick, and his eye had caught a glimpse of the pale and drooping countenance of her who leaned on the arm of the still excited and frowning Mark for support. The young chief listened with a charmed ear. As Content had proceeded, his body

was inclined a little forward, and his whole attitude was that which men unconsciously assume when intensely occupied in listening to sounds of the deepest interest.

"But the sun rose again!" said the great chief, pointing at the evidences of prosperity which were everywhere apparent in the settlement, casting at the same time an uneasy and suspicious glance at his youngest companion. "The morning was clear, though the night was so dark. The cunning of a pale-face knows how to make corn grow on a rock. The foolish Indian eats roots, when crops fail and grain is scarce."

"God ceased to be angry," returned Content meekly, folding his arms in a manner to show he wished to speak no more.

The great chief was about to continue, when his younger associate laid a finger on his naked shoulder, and by a sign, indicated that he wished to hold communication with him apart. The former met the request with respect, though it might be discovered that he little liked the expression of his companion's features, and that he yielded with reluctance, if not with disgust. But the countenance of the youth was firm, and it would have needed more than usual hardihood to refuse a request seconded by so steady and so meaning an eye. The elder spoke to the warrior nearest his elbow, addressing him by the name of Annawon, and then, by a gesture so natural and so dignified that it might have graced the air of a courtier, he announced his readiness to proceed. Notwithstanding the habitual reverence of the aborigines for age, the others gave way for the passage of the young man, in a manner to proclaim that merit or birth, or both, had united to purchase for him a personal distinction which far exceeded that shown in common to men of his years. The two chiefs left the piazza in the noiseless manner of the moccasoned foot.

The passage of these dignified warriors toward the grounds in the rear of the dwelling, as it was characteristic of their habits, is worthy of being mentioned. Neither spoke, neither manifested any womanish impatience to pry into the musings of the other's mind, and neither failed in those slight but still sensible courtesies by which the path was rendered commodious and the footing sure. They had reached the summit of the elevation so often named, ere they believed themselves sufficiently retired to indulge in a discourse which might otherwise have enlightened profane ears. When beneath the shade of the fragrant

orchard which grew on the hill, the senior of the two stopped, and throwing about him one of those quick, nearly imperceptible, and yet wary glances by which an Indian understands his precise position, as it were by instinct, he commenced the dialogue. The discourse was in the dialect of their race; but as it is not probable that many who read these pages would be much enlightened were we to record it in the precise words in which it has been transmitted to us, a translation into English, as freely as the subject requires and the geniuses of the two languages will admit, shall be attempted.

"What would my brother have?" commenced he with the turbaned head, uttering the guttural sounds in the low, soothing tones of friendship, and even of affection. "What troubles the Great Sachem of the Narragansetts? His thoughts seem uneasy. I think there is more before his eye than one whose sight is getting dim can see. Doth he behold the spirit of the brave Miantonimoh, who died like a dog, beneath the blows of cowardly Pequods and false-tongued Yengeese? Or does his heart swell with longing to see the scalps of treacherous pale-faces hanging at his belt? Speak, my son; the hatchet hath long been buried in the path between our villages, and thy words will enter the ears of a friend."

"I do not see the spirit of my father," returned the young sachem; "he is afar off in the hunting grounds of just warriors. My eyes are too weak to look over so many mountains and across so many rivers. He is chasing the moose in grounds where there are no briers; he needeth not the sight of a young man to tell him which way the trail leadeth. Why should I look at the place where the Pequod and the pale-face took his life? The fire which scorched this hill hath blackened the spot, and I can no longer find the marks of blood."

"My son is very wise—cunning beyond his winters! That which hath been once revenged, is forgotten. He looks no further than six moons. He sees the warriors of the Yengeese coming into his village, murdering his old women, and slaying the Narragansett girls; killing his warriors from behind, and lighting their fires with the bones of red men. I will now stop my ears, for the groans of the slaughtered make my soul feel weak."

"Wampanoag," answered the other, with a fierce flashing of his eagle eye, and laying his hand firmly on his breast, "the night the snows were red with the blood of

my people, is here ! my mind is dark : none of my race have since looked upon the place where the lodges of the Narragansetts stood, and yet it hath never been hid from our sight. Since that time have we travelled in the woods, bearing on our backs all that is left but our sorrow—that we carry in our hearts.”

“Why is my brother troubled ? There are many scalps among his people, and see, his own tomahawk is very red ! Let him quiet his anger till the night cometh, and there will be a deeper stain on the axe. I know he is in a hurry, but our councils say it is better to wait for darkness, since the cunning of the pale-faces is too strong for the hands of our young men.”

“When was a Narragansett slow to leap, after the whoop was given, or unwilling to stay when men of gray heads say 'tis better ? I like your counsel—it is full of wisdom. Yet an Indian is but a man ! Can he fight with the God of the Yengeese ? He is too weak. An Indian is but a man, though his skin be red !”

“I look into the clouds, at the trees, among the lodges,” said the other, affecting to gaze curiously at the different objects he named, “but I cannot see the white Manitou. The pale men were talking to him when we raised the whoop in their fields, and yet he has not heard them. Go ; my son has struck their warriors with a strong hand ; has he forgotten to count how many dead lie among the trees, with the sweet-smelling blossoms ?”

“Metacom,” returned he who has been called the Sachem of the Narragansetts, stepping cautiously nearer to his friend, and speaking lower, as if he feared an invisible auditor ; “thou hast put hate into the bosoms of the red men, but canst thou make them more cunning than the Spirits ? Hate is very strong, but cunning hath a longer arm. See,” he added, raising the fingers of his two hands before the eyes of his attentive companion, “ten snows have come and melted since there stood a lodge of the pale-faces on this hill. Conanchet was then a boy. His hand had struck nothing but deer. His heart was full of wishes. By day he thought of Pequod scalps, at night he heard the dying words of Miantonimoh. Though slain by cowardly Pequods and lying Yengeese, his father came with the night into his wigwam, to talk to his son. ‘Does the child of so many great sachems grow big ?’ would he say ; ‘is his arm getting strong, his foot light, his eye quick, his heart valiant ? Will Conanchet be like his

fathers? when will the young Sachem of the Narragansetts become a man?" Why should I tell my brother of these visits? Metacom hath often seen the long line of Wampanoag chiefs, in his sleep. The brave sachems sometimes enter into the heart of their son!"

The lofty-minded though wily Philip struck his hand heavily upon his naked breast, as he answered—

"They are always here. Metacom has no soul but the spirit of his fathers!"

"When he was tired of silence the murdered Miantonimoh spoke aloud," continued Conanchet, after permitting the customary courteous pause to succeed the emphatic words of his companion. "He bade his son arise, and go among the Yengeese, that he might return with scalps to hang in his wigwam; for the eyes of the dead chief liked not to see the place so empty. The voice of Conanchet was then too feeble for the council-fire; he said nothing—he went alone. An evil spirit gave him into the hands of the pale-faces. He was a captive many moons. They shut him in a cage, like a tamed panther! It was here. The news of his ill-luck passed from the mouths of the young men of the Yengeese to the hunters, and from the hunters it came to the ears of the Narragansetts. My people had lost their sachem, and they came to seek him. Metacom, the boy had felt the power of the God of the Yengeese! His mind began to grow weak; he thought less of revenge; the spirit of his father came no more at night. There was much talking with the unknown God, and the words of his enemies were kind. He hunted with them. When he met the trail of his warriors in the woods his mind was troubled, for he knew their errand. Still he saw his father's spirit, and waited. The whoop was heard that night; many died, and the Narragansetts took scalps. Thou seest this lodge of stone, over which fire has passed. There was then a cunning place above, and in it the pale men went to fight for their lives. But the fire kindled, and then there was no hope. The soul of Conanchet was moved at that sight, for there was much honesty in them within. Though their skins were so white, they had not slain his father. But the flames would not be spoken to, and the place became like the coals of a deserted council-fire. All within were turned to ashes. If the spirit of Miantonimoh rejoiced, it was well, but the soul of his son was very heavy. The weakness was on him, and he no longer thought of boasting of his deeds at the war-post."

"That fire scorched the stain of blood from the sachem's plain?"

"It did. Since that time I have not seen the marks of my father's blood. Gray heads and boys were in that fire, and when the timbers fell nothing was left but coals. Yet do they, who were in the blazing lodge, stand there!"

The attentive Metacom started, and glanced a hasty look at the ruin.

"Does my son see spirits in the air!" he asked hastily.

"No, they live; they are bound for the torments. In the white head, is he who talked much with his god. The elder chief who struck our young men so hard, was then also a captive in this lodge. He who spoke, and she who seems even paler than her race, died that night; and yet are they now here! Even the brave youth that was so hard to conquer, looks like a boy that was in the fire! The Yengeese deal with unknown gods; they are too cunning for an Indian!"

Philip heard this strange tale, as a being educated in superstitious legends would be apt to listen; and yet it was with a leaning to incredulity, that was generated by his fierce and indomitable desire for the destruction of the hated race. He had prevailed, in the councils of his nation, over many similar signs of supernatural agency that was exercised in favor of his enemies, but never before had facts so imposing come so directly and from so high a source before his mind. Even the proud resolution and far-sighted wisdom of this sagacious chief was shaken by such testimony, and there was a single moment when the idea of abandoning a league that seemed desperate took possession of his brain. But true to himself and his cause, second thoughts and a firmer purpose restored his resolution, though they could not remove the perplexity of his doubts.

"What does Conanchet wish?" he said. "Twice have his warriors broken into this valley, and twice have the tomahawks of his young men been redder than the head of the woodpecker. The fire was not good fire; the tomahawk will kill surer. Had not the voice of my brother said to his young men, 'let the scalps of the prisoners alone,' he could not now say, 'yet do they now stand here!'"

"My mind is troubled, friend of my father. Let them be questioned artfully, that the truth be known."

Metacom mused an instant; then smiling in a friendly

manner on his young and much moved companion he made a sign to a youth who was straying about the fields to approach. This young warrior was made the bearer of an order to lead the captives to the hill, after which the two chiefs stalked to and fro in silence, each brooding over what had passed, in a humor that was suited to his particular character and more familiar feelings.

CHAPTER XXV.

“No withered witch shall here be seen,
No goblins lead their nightly crew ;
The female fays shall haunt the green,
And dress thy grave with pearly dew.”—COLLINS.

It is rarely indeed that the philosophy of a dignified Indian is so far disturbed as to destroy the appearance of equanimity. When Content and the family of the Heathcotes appeared on the hill, they found the chiefs still pacing the orchard, with the outward composure of men unmoved, and with the gravity that was suited to their rank. Annawon, who had acted as their conductor, caused the captives to be placed in a row, choosing the foot of the ruin for their position, and then he patiently awaited the moment when his superiors might be pleased to renew the examination. In this habitual silence, there was nothing of the abject air of Asiatic deference. It proceeded from the habit of self-command which taught the Indian to repress all natural emotions. A very similar effect was produced by the religious abasement of those whom fortune had now thrown into their power. It would have been a curious study for one interested in the manners of the human species, to note the difference between the calm, physical, and perfect self-possession of the wild tenants of the forest, and the ascetic, spiritually sustained, and yet meek submission to Providence, that was exhibited by most of the prisoners. We say of most, for there was an exception. The brow of young Mark still retained its frown, and the angry character of his eye was only lost when by chance it lighted on the drooping form and pallid features of his mother. There was ample time for these several and peculiar qualities to be thus silently exhibited, many minutes passing before either of the sachems seemed

inclined to recommence the conference. At length Philip, or Metacom, as we shall indifferently call him, drew near and spoke.

"This earth is a good earth," he said; "it is of many colors, to please the eyes of Him who made it. In one part it is dark, and as the worm taketh the color of the leaf on which he crawls, there the hunters are black; in another part it is white, and that is the part where pale men were born, and where they should die; or they may miss the road which leads to their happy hunting grounds. Many just warriors who have been killed on distant war-paths still wander in the woods, because the trail is hid and their sight dim. It is not good to trust so much to the cunning of——"

"Wretched and blind worshipper of Apollyon!" interrupted the Puritan, "we are not of the idolatrous and foolish-minded! It hath been accorded to us to know the Lord; to his chosen worshippers all regions are alike. The spirit can mount equally through snows and whirlwinds; the tempest and the calm; from the lands of the sun, and the lands of frosts; from the depths of the ocean, from fire, from the forest——"

He was interrupted in his turn. At the word fire, the finger of Metacom fell meaningly on his shoulder, and when he had ceased, for until then no Indian would have spoken, the other gravely asked—

"And when a man of a pale skin hath gone up in the fire can he again walk upon earth? Is the river between this clearing and the pleasant fields of a Yengeese so narrow, that the just men can step across it when they please?"

"This is the conceit of one wallowing in the slough of heathenish abominations! Child of ignorance! know that the barriers which separate heaven from earth are impassable; for what purified being could endure the wickedness of the flesh?"

"This is a lie of the false pale-faces," said the wily Philip; "it is told that the Indian might not learn their cunning, and become stronger than a Yengeese. My father, and those with him, were once burnt in this lodge, and now he standeth here, ready to take the tomahawk!"

"To be angered at this blasphemy, would ill denote the pity that I feel," said Mark, more excited at the charge of necromancy than he was willing to own; "and yet to suffer so fatal an error to spread among these deuded victims of

Satan, would be neglect of duty. Thou hast heard some legend of thy wild people, man of the Wampanoags, which may heap double perdition on thy soul lest thou shouldst happily be rescued from the fangs of the deceiver. It is true, that I and mine were in exceeding jeopardy in this tower, and that to the eyes of men without we seemed melted with the heat of the flames ; but the Lord put it into our spirits to seek refuge whither fire could not come. The well was made the instrument of our safety, for the fulfilment of His own inscrutable designs."

Notwithstanding the long practised and exceeding subtlety of the listeners, they heard this simple explanation of that which they had deemed a miracle, with a wonder that could not readily be concealed. Delight at the excellence of the artifice was evidently the first and common emotion of them both ; nor would they yield implicit faith until assured beyond a doubt that what they heard was true. The little iron door, which had permitted access to the well, for the ordinary domestic purposes of the family, was still there ; and it was only after each had cast a look down the deep shaft, that he appeared satisfied of the practicability of the deed. Then a look of triumph gleamed in the swarthy visage of Philip, while the features of his associate expressed equally his satisfaction and his regret. They walked apart, musing on what they had just seen and heard ; and when they spoke, it was again in the language of their people.

"My son hath a tongue that cannot lie," observed Metacom, in a soothing, flattering accent. "What he hath seen, he tells ; and what he tells, is true. Conanchet is not a boy, but a chief whose wisdom is gray, while his limbs are young. Now why shall not his people take the scalps of these Yengeese, that they may never go any more into holes in the earth, like cunning foxes ?"

"The sachem hath a very bloody mind," returned the young chief, quicker than was common for men of his station. "Let the arms of the warriors rest, till they meet the armed hands of the Yengeese, or they will be too tired to strike heavily. My young men have taken scalps since the sun came over the trees, and they are satisfied—Why does Metacom look so hard ? What does my father see ?"

"A dark spot in the middle of a white plain. The grass is not green ; it is red as blood. It is too dark for the blood of a pale-face. It is the rich blood of a great war-

rior. The rains cannot wash it out ; it grows darker every sun. The snows do not whiten it ; it hath been there many winters. The birds scream as they fly over it ; the wolf howls ; the lizards creep another way."

"Thine eyes are getting old ; fire hath blackened the place, and what thou seest is coal."

"The fire was kindled in a well ; it did not burn bright. What I see, is blood."

"Wampanoag," rejoined Conanchet, fiercely, "I have scorched the spot with the lodges of the Yengeese. The grave of my father is covered with scalps taken by the hand of his son—Why does Metacom look again ? What does the chief see ?"

"An Indian town burning in the midst of the snow ; the young men struck from behind ; the girls screaming ; the children broiling on coals, and the old men dying like dogs ! It is the village of the cowardly Pequods—No, I see better ; the Yengeese are in the country of the Great Narragansett, and the brave sachem is there, fighting ! I shut my eyes, for smoke blinds them !"

Conanchet heard this allusion to the recent and deplorable fate of the principal establishment of his tribe, in sullen silence ; for the desire of revenge, which had been so fearfully awakened, seemed now to be slumbering, if it were not entirely quelled by the agency of some mysterious and potent feeling. He rolled his eyes gloomily, from the apparently abstracted countenance of his artful companion, to those of the captives, whose fate only awaited his judgment, since the band which had that morning broken in upon the Wish-Ton-Wish was, with but few exceptions, composed of the surviving warriors of his own powerful nation. But, while his look was displeased, faculties that were schooled so highly, could not easily be mistaken in what passed, even in the most cursory manner, before his sight.

"What sees my father next ?" he asked, with an interest he could not control, detecting another change in the features of Metacom.

"One who is neither white nor red. A young woman, that boundeth like a skipping fawn ; who hath lived in a wigwam, doing nothing ; who speaks with two tongues ; who holds her hands before the eyes of a great warrior, till he is blind as the owl in the sun—I see her——"

Metacom paused, for at that moment a being that singularly resembled this description appeared before him, offer-

ing the reality of the imaginary picture he was drawing with so much irony and art.

The movement of the timid hare is scarce more hurried, or more undecided, than that of the creature who now suddenly presented herself to the warriors. It was apparent, by the hesitating and half-retreating step that succeeded the light bound with which she came in view, that she dreaded to advance, while she knew not how far it might be proper to retire. For the first moment, she stood in a suspended and doubting posture, such as one might suppose a creature of mist would assume ere it vanished, and then meeting the eye of Conanchet, the uplifted foot re-touched the earth, and her whole form sank into the modest and shrinking attitude of an Indian girl, who stood in the presence of a sachem of her tribe. As this female is to enact no mean part in that which follows, the reader may be thankful for a more minute description of her person.

The age of the stranger was under twenty. In form she rose above the usual stature of an Indian maid, though the proportions of her person were as light and buoyant as at all comported with the fulness that properly belonged to her years. The limbs, seen below the folds of a short kirtle of bright scarlet cloth, were just and tapering, even to the nicest proportions of classic beauty ; and never did foot of higher instep, and softer roundness, grace a feathered moc-cason. Though the person, from the neck to the knees was hid by a tightly-fitting vest of calico and the short kirtle named, enough of the shape was visible to betray outlines that had never been injured, either by the mistaken devices of art or by the baneful effects of toil. The skin was only visible at the hands, face, and neck. Its lustre having been a little dimmed by exposure, a rich, rosy tint had usurped the natural brightness of a complexion that had once been fair even to brilliancy. The eye was full, sweet, and of a blue that emulated the sky of evening ; the brows, soft and arched ; the nose, straight, delicate, and slightly Grecian ; the forehead, fuller than that which properly belonged to a girl of the Narragansetts, but regular, delicate, and polished ; and the hair, instead of dropping in long straight tresses of jet black, broke out of the restraints of a band of beaded wampum, in ringlets of golden yellow.

The peculiarities that distinguished this female from the others of her tribe, were not confined alone to the indelible marks of nature. Her step was more elastic—her gait more

erect and graceful—her foot less inwardly inclined, and her whole movements freer and more decided than those of a race doomed from infancy to subjection and labor. Though ornamented by some of the prized inventions of the hated race to which she evidently owed her birth, she had the wild and timid look of those with whom she had grown into womanhood. Her beauty would have been remarkable in any region of the earth, while the play of muscle, the ingenuous beaming of the eye, and the freedom of limb and action were such as seldom pass beyond the years of childhood, among people who, in attempting to improve, so often mar the works of nature.

Although the color of the eye was so very different from that which generally belongs to one of Indian origin, the manner of its quick and searching glance, and of the half-alarmed and yet understanding look with which this extraordinary creature made herself mistress of the more general character of the assemblage before which she had been summoned, was like the half-instinctive knowledge of one accustomed to the constant and keenest exercise of her faculties. Pointing with a finger toward Whittal Ring, who stood a little in the background, a low, sweet voice was heard, asking, in the language of the Indians—

“Why has Conanchet sent for his woman from the woods?”

The young sachem made no reply. An ordinary spectator could not have detected about him even a consciousness of the speaker's presence. On the contrary, he maintained the lofty reserve of a chief engaged in affairs of moment. However deeply his thoughts might have been troubled, it was not easy to trace any evidence of the state of his mind in the calmness of features that appeared habitually immovable. For a single treacherous instant only, was a glance of kindness shot toward the timid and attentive girl, and then throwing the still bloody tomahawk into the hollow of one arm, while the hand of the other firmly grasped its handle, he remained unchanged in feature, as he was rigid in limb. Not so with Philip. When the intruder first appeared, a dark and lowering gleam of discontent gathered at his brow. It quickly changed to a look of sarcastic and biting scorn.

“Does my brother again wish to know what I see?” he demanded, when sufficient time had passed, after the unanswered question of the female, to show that his companion was not disposed to answer.

"What does the Sachem of the Wampanoags now behold?" returned Conanchet, proudly, unwilling to show that any circumstance had occurred to interrupt the subject of their conference.

"A sight that his eyes will not believe. He sees a great tribe on the war-path. There are many braves, and a chief whose fathers came from the clouds. Their hands are in the air. They strike heavy blows; the arrow is swift, and the bullet is not seen to enter—but it kills. Blood runs from the wounds, that is of the color of water. Now he does not see, but he hears! 'Tis the scalp-whoop, and the warriors are very glad. The chiefs in the happy hunting grounds are coming with joy to meet Indians that are killed; for they know the scalp-whoop of their children."

The expressive countenance of the young sachem involuntarily responded to this description of the scene through which he had just passed; and it was impossible for one so tutored, to prevent the blood from rushing faster to a heart that ever beat strongly with the wishes of a warrior.

"What sees my father next?" he asked, triumph insensibly stealing into the tones of his voice.

"A messenger: and then he hears—the moccasons of squaws!"

"Enough;—Metacom, the women of the Narragansetts have no lodges. Their villages are in coals, and they follow the young men for food."

"I see no deer. The hunter will not find venison in a clearing of the pale-faces. But the corn is full of milk. Conanchet is very hungry; he hath sent for his woman, that he may eat!"

The fingers of that hand which grasped the handle of the tomahawk appeared to bury themselves in the wood. The glittering axe itself was slightly raised; but the fierce gleaming of resentment subsided, as the anger of the young sachem vanished, and a dignified calm again settled on his countenance.

"Go, Wampanoag," he said, waving a hand proudly, as if determined to be no longer harassed by the language of his wily associate. "My young men will raise the whoop when they hear my voice, and they will kill deer for their women. Sachem, my mind is my own."

Philip answered to the look which accompanied these words, with one that threatened vengeance; but smothering his anger with his accustomed wisdom, he left the hill,

assuming an air that affected more of commiseration than of resentment.

"Why has Conanchet sent for a woman from the woods?" repeated the same soft voice, nearer to the elbow of the young sachem, and which spoke with less of the timidity of the sex, now that the troubled spirit of the Indians of those regions had disappeared.

"Narra-mattah, come near," returned the young chief, changing the deep and proud tones in which he had addressed his restless and bold companion in arms, to those which better suited the gentle ear for which his words were intended. "Fear not, daughter of the morning; for those around us are of a race used to see women at the council-fires. Now look, with an open eye. Is there anything among these trees that seemeth like an ancient tradition? Hast ever beheld such a valley in thy dreams? Have yonder pale-faces whom the tomahawks of my young men spared, been led before thee by the Great Spirit in the dark night?"

The female listened in deep attention. Her gaze was wild and uncertain, and yet it was not absolutely without gleamings of a half-reviving intelligence. Until that moment she had been too much occupied in conjecturing the subject of her visit, to regard the natural objects by which she was surrounded; but with her attention thus directly turned upon them, her organs of sight embraced each and all, with the discrimination that is so remarkable in those whose faculties are quickened by danger and necessity. Passing from side to side, her swift glances ran over the distant hamlet, with its little fort, the buildings in the near grounds, the soft and verdant fields—the fragrant orchard, beneath whose leafy shades she stood, and the blackened tower that rose in its centre like some gloomy memorial, placed there to remind the spectator not to trust too fondly to the signs of peace and loveliness that reigned around. Shaking back the ringlets that had blown about her temples, the wondering female returned thoughtfully and in silence to her place.

"'Tis a village of the Yengeese!" she said, after a long and expressive pause. "A Narragansett woman does not love to look at the lodges of the hated race."

"Listen—Lies have never entered the ears of Narra-mattah. My tongue hath spoken like the tongue of a chief. Thou didst not come of the sumach, but of the snow. This hand of thine is not like the hands of the

women of my tribe ; it is little, for the Great Spirit did not make it for work ; it is of the color of the sky in the morning, for thy fathers were born near the place where the sun rises. Thy blood is like spring-water. All this thou knowest, for none have spoken falsely in thy ear. Speak—dost thou never see the wigwam of thy father ? Does not his voice whisper to thee in the language of his people ?”

The female stood in the attitude which a sibyl might be supposed to assume, while listening to the occult mandates of the mysterious oracle, every faculty entranced and attentive.

“Why does Conanchet ask these questions of his wife ? He knows what she knows ; he sees what she sees ; his mind is her mind. If the Great Spirit made her skin of a different color, he made her heart the same. Narra-mattah will not listen to the lying language ; she shuts her ears, for there is deceit in its sounds. She tries to forget it. One tongue can say all she wishes to speak to Conanchet ; why should she look back in dreams, when a great chief is her husband ?”

The eye of the warrior, as he looked upon the ingenuous and confiding face of the speaker, was kind to fondness. The firmness had passed away, and in its place was left the winning softness of affection, which, as it belongs to nature, is seen, at times, in the expression of an Indian's eye, as strongly as it is ever known to sweeten the intercourse of a more polished condition of life.

“Girl,” he said with emphasis, after a moment of thought, as if he would recall her and himself to more important duties, “this is a war-path ; all on it are men. Thou wast like the pigeon before its wing opens, when I brought thee from the nest ; still the winds of many winters had blown upon thee. Dost never think of the warmth and of the food of the lodge in which thou hast passed so many seasons ?”

“The wigwam of Conanchet is warm ; no woman of the tribe hath as many furs as Narra-mattah.”

“He is a great hunter ! when they hear his moccason, the beavers lie down to be killed ! But the men of the pale-faces hold the plough. Does not ‘the driven snow’ think of those who fenced the wigwam of her father from the cold, or of the manner in which the Yengeese live ?”

His youthful and attentive wife seemed to reflect ; but

raising her face, with an expression of content that could not be counterfeited, she shook her head in the negative.

"Does she never see a fire kindled among the lodges, or hear the whoops of warriors as they break into a settlement?"

"Many fires have been kindled before her eyes. The ashes of the Narragansett town are not yet cold."

"Does not Narra-mattah hear her father speaking to the God of the Yengeese! Listen—he is asking favor of his child?"

"The Great Spirit of the Narragansett has ears for his people."

"But I hear a softer voice! 'Tis a woman of the pale-faces among her children; cannot the daughter hear?"

Narra-mattah, or "the driven snow," laid her hand lightly on the arm of the chief, and she looked wistfully and long into his face, without an answer. The gaze seemed to deprecate the anger that might be awakened by what she was about to reveal.

"Chief of my people," she said, encouraged by his still calm and gentle brow, to proceed, "what a girl of the clearings sees in her dreams, shall not be hid. It is not the lodges of her race, for the wigwam of her husband is warmer. It is not the food and clothes of a cunning people, for who is richer than the wife of a great chief? It is not her father speaking to their Spirit, for there is none stronger than Manitou. Narra-mattah has forgotten all; she does not wish to think of things like these. She knows how to hate a hungry and craving race. But she sees one that the wives of the Narragansetts do not see. She sees a woman with a white skin; her eyes look softly on her child in her dreams; it is not an eye, it is a tongue! It says, what does the wife of Conanchet wish?—is she cold? here are furs—is she hungry? here is venison—is she tired? the arms of the pale woman open, that an Indian girl may sleep. When there is silence in the lodges, when Conanchet and his young men lie down, then does this pale woman speak. Sachem, she does not talk of the battles of her people, nor of the scalps that her warriors have taken, nor of the manner in which the Pequods and Mohicans fear her tribe. She does not tell how a young Narragansett should obey her husband, nor how the woman must keep food in the lodges for the hunters that are wearied; her tongue useth strange words. It names a mighty and just Spirit, it telleth of peace and not of

war ; it soundeth as one talking from the clouds ; it is like the falling of the water among rocks. Narrā-mattah loves to listen, for the words seem to her like the Wish-Ton-Wish, when he whistles in the woods."

Conanchet had fastened a look of deep and affectionate interest on the wild and sweet countenance of the being who stood before him. She had spoken in that attitude of earnest and natural eloquence that no art can equal ; and when she ceased, he laid a hand, in kind but melancholy fondness, on the half-inclined and motionless head, as he answered :

"This is the bird of night, singing to its young ! The Great Spirit of thy fathers is angry, that thou livest in the lodge of a Narragansett. His sight is too cunning to be cheated. He knows that the moccason, and the wampum, and the robe of furs are liars ; he sees the color of the skin beneath."

"Conanchet, no," returned the female hurriedly, and with a decision her timidity did not give reason to expect. "He seeth further than the skin, and knoweth the color of the mind. He hath forgotten that one of his girls is missing."

"It is not so. The eagle of my people was taken into the lodges of the pale-faces. He was young, and they taught him to sing with another tongue. The colors of his feathers were changed, and they thought to cheat the Manitou. But when the door was open, he spread his wings and flew back to his nest. It is not so. What hath been done is good, and what will be done is better. Come, there is a straight path before us."

Thus saying, Conanchet motioned to his wife to follow toward the group of captives. The foregoing dialogue had occurred in a place where the two parties were partially concealed from each other by the ruin ; but as the distance was so trifling, the sachem and his companion were soon confronted by those he sought. Leaving his wife a little without the circle, Conanchet advanced, and taking the unresisting and half-unconscious Ruth by the arm, he led her forward. He placed the two females in attitudes where each might look the other full in the face. Strong emotion struggled in a countenance, which, in spite of its fierce mask of war-paint, could not entirely conceal its workings.

"See," he said in English, looking earnestly from one to the other. "The Good Spirit is not ashamed of his

work. What he hath done, he hath done ; Narragansett nor Yengeese can alter it. This is the white bird that came from the sea," he added, touching the shoulder of Ruth lightly with a finger, "and this the young, that she warmed under her wing."

Then, folding his arms on his naked breast, he appeared to summon his energy, lest, in the scene that he knew must follow, his manhood might be betrayed into some act unworthy of his name.

The captives were necessarily ignorant of the meaning of the scene which they had just witnessed. So many strange and savage-looking forms were constantly passing and repassing before their eyes, that the arrival of one more or less was not likely to be noted. Until she heard Conanchet speak in her native tongue, Ruth had lent no attention to the interview between him and his wife. But the figurative language and no less remarkable action of the Narragansett had the effect to arouse her suddenly, and in the most exciting manner, from her melancholy.

No child of tender age ever unexpectedly came before the eyes of Ruth Heathcote, without painfully recalling the image of the cherub she had lost. The playful voice of infancy never surprised her ear, without the sound conveying a pang to the heart ; nor could allusion, ever so remote, be made to persons or events that bore resemblance to the sad incidents of her own life, without quickening the never-dying pulses of maternal love. No wonder, then, that when she found herself in the situation and under the circumstances described, nature grew strong within her, and that her mind caught glimpses, however dim and indistinct they might be, of a truth that the reader has already anticipated. Still, a certain and intelligible clew was wanting. Fancy had ever painted her child in the innocence and infancy in which it had been torn from her arms ; and here, while there was so much to correspond with reasonable expectation, there was little to answer to the long and fondly cherished picture. The delusion, if so holy and natural a feeling may thus be termed, had been too deeply seated to be dispossessed at a glance. Gazing long, earnestly, and with features that varied with every changing feeling, she held the stranger at the length of her two arms, alike unwilling to release her hold, or to admit her closer to a heart which might rightfully be the property of another.

"Who art thou ?" demanded the mother, in a voice that

was tremulous with the emotions of that sacred character. "Speak, mysterious and lovely being—who art thou?"

Narra-mattah had turned a terrified and imploring look at the immovable and calm form of the chief, as if she sought protection from him at whose hands she had been accustomed to receive it. But a different sensation took possession of her mind, when she heard sounds which had too often soothed the ear of infancy ever to be forgotten. Struggling ceased, and her pliant form assumed the attitude of intense and entranced attention. Her head was bent aside, as if the ear were eager to drink in a repetition of the tones, while her bewildered and delighted eye still sought the countenance of her husband.

"Vision of the woods! wilt thou not answer?" continued Ruth. "If there is reverence for the Holy One of Israel in thine heart, answer that I may know thee!"

"Hist! Conanchet!" murmured the wife, over whose features the glow of pleased and wild surprise continued to deepen. "Come near, sachem, the spirit that talketh to Narra-mattah in her dreams is nigh."

"Woman of the Yengeese!" said the husband, advancing with dignity to the spot, "let the clouds blow from thy sight.—Wife of a Narragansett! see clearly. The Manitou of your race speaks strong. He telleth a mother to know her child!"

Ruth could hesitate no longer; neither sound nor exclamation escaped her, but as she strained the yielding frame of her recovered daughter to her heart it appeared as if she strove to incorporate the two bodies into one. A cry of pleasure and astonishment drew all around her. Then came the evidence of the power of nature when strongly awakened. Age and youth alike acknowledged its potency, and recent alarms were overlooked in the pure joy of such a moment. The spirit of even the lofty-minded Conanchet was shaken. Raising the hand, at whose wrist still hung the bloody tomahawk, he veiled his face, and turning aside, that none might see the weakness of so great a warrior, he wept.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ One sees more devils than vast hell can hold ;
That is the madman :—” *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

ON quitting the hill Philip had summoned his Wampanoags, and supported by the obedient and fierce Annawon, a savage that might, under better auspices, have proved a worthy lieutenant to Cæsar, he left the fields of Wish-Ton-Wish. Accustomed to see these sudden outbreakings of temper in their leaders, the followers of Conanchet, who would have preserved their air of composure under far more trying circumstances, saw him depart equally without question and without alarm. But when their own sachem appeared on the ground, which was still red with the blood of the combatants, and made known his intention to abandon a conquest that seemed more than half achieved, he was not heard without murmuring. The authority of an Indian chief is far from despotic, and though there is reason to think it is often aided, if not generated, by the accidental causes of birth and descent, it receives its main support in the personal qualities of him who rules. Happily for the Narragansett leader, even his renowned father, the hapless Miantonimoh, had not purchased a higher name for wisdom or for daring than that which had been fairly won by his still youthful son. The savage humors and the rankling desire for vengeance in the boldest of his subalterns were made to quail before the menacing glances of an eye that seldom threatened without performance ; nor was there one of them all, when challenged to come forth to brave the anger or to oppose the eloquence of his chief, who did not shrink from a contest which habitual respect had taught them to believe would be far too unequal for success. Within less than an hour after Ruth had clasped her child to her bosom the invaders had altogether disappeared. The dead of their party were withdrawn and concealed with all the usual care, in order that no scalp of a warrior might be left in the hands of his enemies.

It was not unusual for the Indians to retire satisfied with the results of their first blow. So much of their military success was dependent on surprise, that it oftener happened the retreat commenced with its failure, than that victory was obtained by perseverance.

So long as the battle raged, their courage was equal to all its dangers ; but among people who made so great a merit of artifice, it is not at all surprising that they seldom put more to the hazard than was justified by the most severe discretion. When it was known, therefore, that the foe had disappeared in the forest, the inhabitants of the village were more ready to believe the movement was the result of their own manful resistance, than to seek motives that might not prove so soothing to their self-esteem. The retreat was thought to be quite in rule, and though prudence forbade pursuit, able and well-limbed scouts were sent on their trail, as well to prevent a renewal of the surprise, as to enable the forces of the Colony to know the tribe of their enemies, and the direction which they had taken.

Then came a scene of solemn ceremonies and of deep affliction. Though the parties led by Dudley and the lieutenant had been so fortunate as to escape with a few immaterial wounds, the soldiers headed by Content; with the exception of those already named, had fallen to a man. Death had struck, at a blow, twenty of the most efficient individuals, out of that isolated and simple community. Under circumstances in which victory was so barren and so dearly bought, sorrow was a feeling far stronger than rejoicing. Exultation took the aspect of humility, and while men were conscious of their well-deserving, they were the more sensible of their dependence on a power they could neither influence nor comprehend. The characteristic opinions of the religionists became still more exalted, and the close of the day was quite as remarkable for an exhibition of the peculiarly exaggerated impressions of the colonists, as its opening had been frightful in violence and blood.

When one of the more active of the runners returned with the news that the Indians had retired through the forest with a broad trail, a sure sign that they meditated no further concealment near the valley, and that they had already been traced many miles on their retreat, the villagers returned to their usual habitations. The dead were then distributed among those who claimed the nearest right to the performance of the last duties of affection ; and it might have been truly said, that mourning had taken up its abode in nearly every dwelling. The ties of blood were so general in a society thus limited, and, where they failed, the charities of life were so intimate and so natural, that not an individual of them all escaped without feeling

that the events of the day had robbed him, forever, of some one on whom he was partially dependent for comfort or happiness.

As the day drew toward its close, the little bell again summoned the congregation to the church. On this solemn occasion, but few of those who still lived to hear its sounds were absent. The moment when Meek arose for prayer was one of general and intense feeling. The places so lately occupied by those who had fallen were now empty, and they resembled so many eloquent blanks in the description of what had passed, expressing far more than any language could impart. The appeal of the divine was in his usual strain of sublimated piety, mysterious insights into the hidden purposes of Providence being strangely blended with the more intelligible wants and passions of man. While he gave Heaven the glory of the victory, he spoke with a lofty and pretending humility of the instruments of its power ; and although seemingly willing to acknowledge that his people abundantly deserved the heavy blow which had alighted on them, there was an evident impatience of the agents by which it had been inflicted. The principles of the sectarian were so singularly qualified by the feelings of the borderer, that one subtle in argument would have found little difficulty in detecting flaws in the reasoning of this zealot ; but as so much was obscured by metaphysical mists, and so much was left for the generalities of doctrine, his hearers, without an exception, made such an application of what he uttered as apparently rendered every mind satisfied.

The sermon was as extemporaneous as the prayer, if anything can come extempore from a mind so drilled and fortified in opinion. It contained much the same matter, delivered a little less in the form of an apostrophe. The stricken congregation, while they were encouraged with the belief that they were vessels set apart for some great and glorious end of Providence, were plainly told that they merited far heavier affliction than this which had now befallen ; and they were reminded that it was their duty to desire even condemnation, that he who framed the heavens and the earth might be glorified ! Then they heard comfortable conclusions, which might reasonably teach them to expect, that though in the abstract such were the obligations of the real Christian, there was good reason to think that all who listened to doctrines so pure would be remembered with an especial favor.

So useful a servant of the temple as Meek Wolfe did not forget the practical application of his subject. It is true, that no visible emblem of the cross was shown to excite his hearers, nor were they stimulated to loosen blood-hounds on the trail of their enemies; but the former was kept sufficiently before the mind's eye by constant allusions to its merits, and the Indians were pointed at as the instruments by which the great father of evil hoped to prevent "the wilderness from blossoming like the rose," and "yielding the sweet savors of godliness." Philip and Conanchet were openly denounced by name; some dark insinuations being made, that the person of the former was no more than the favorite tenement of Moloch; while the hearer was left to devise a suitable spirit for the government of the physical powers of the other, from among any of the more evil agencies that were named in the Bible. Any doubts of the lawfulness of the contest, that might assail tender consciences, were brushed away by a bold and decided hand. There was no attempt at justification, however; for all difficulties of this nature were resolved by the imperative obligations of duty. A few ingenious allusions to the manner in which the Israelites dispossessed the occupants of Judea, were of great service in this particular part of the subject, since it was not difficult to convince men, who so strongly felt the impulses of religious excitement, that they were stimulated rightfully. Fortified by this advantage, Mr. Wolfe manifested no desire to avoid the main question. He affirmed that if the empire of the true faith could be established by no other means, a circumstance which he assumed it was sufficiently apparent to all understandings could not be done, he pronounced it the duty of young and old, the weak and the strong, to unite in assisting to visit the former possessors of the country with what he termed the wrath of an offended Deity. He spoke of the fearful slaughter of the preceding winter, in which neither years nor sex had been spared, as a triumph of the righteous cause, and as an encouragement to persevere. Then, by a transition that was not extraordinary in an age so remarkable for religious subtleties, Meek returned to the more mild and obvious truths which pervade the doctrines of Him whose Church he professed to uphold. His hearers were admonished to observe lives of humility and charity, and were piously dismissed, with his benediction, to their several homes.

The congregation quitted the building with the feelings

of men who thought themselves favored by peculiar and extraordinary intelligences with the author of all truth, while the army of Mahomet itself was scarcely less influenced by fanaticism than these blinded zealots. There was something so grateful to human frailty in reconciling their resentments and their temporal interests to their religious duties, that it should excite little wonder when we add that most of them were fully prepared to become ministers of vengeance in the hands of any bold leader. While the inhabitants of the settlement were thus struggling between passions so contradictory, the shades of evening gradually fell upon their village, and then came darkness, with the rapid strides with which it follows the setting of the sun in a low latitude.

Some time before the shadows of the trees were getting the grotesque and exaggerated forms which precede the last rays of the luminary, and while the people were still listening to their pastor, a solitary individual was placed on a giddy eyrie, whence he might note the movements of those who dwelt in the hamlet, without being the subject of observation himself. A short spur of the mountain projected into the valley, on the side nearest to the dwelling of the Heathcotes. A little tumbling brook, which the melting of the snows and the occasional heavy rains of the climate periodically increased into a torrent, had worn a deep ravine in its rocky bosom. Time and the constant action of water, aided by the driving storms of winter and autumn, had converted many of the different faces of this ravine into wild-looking pictures of the residences of men. There was, however, one spot in particular, around which a closer inspection than that which the distance of the houses in the settlement offered, might have detected far more plausible signs of the agency of human hands than any that were afforded by the fancied resemblances of fantastic angles and accidental formations.

Precisely at that point where a sweep of the mountain permitted the best view of the valley, did the rocks assume the wildest, the most confused, and consequently the most favorable appearance for the construction of any residence which it was desirable should escape the curious eyes of the settlers, at the same time that it possessed the advantage of overlooking their proceedings. A hermit would have chosen the place as a spot suited to distant and calm observation of the world, while it was every way adapted

to solitary reflection and ascetic devotion. All who have journeyed through the narrow and water-worn vineyards and meadows which are washed by the Rhone, ere that river pours its tribute into the Lake of Lemman, have seen some such site, occupied by one who has devoted his life to seclusion and the altar, overhanging the village of St. Maurice, in the Canton of le Valais. But there is an air of obtrusiveness in the Swiss hermitage that did not belong to the place of which we write, since the one is perched upon its high and narrow ledge, as if to show the world in what dangerous and circumscribed limits God may be worshipped; while the other sought exemption from absolute solitude, while it courted secesy with the most jealous caution. A small hut had been erected against a side of the rock, in a manner that presented an oblique angle. Care had been taken to surround it with such natural objects as left little reason to apprehend that its real character could be known by any who did not absolutely mount to the difficult shelf on which it stood. Light entered into this primitive and humble abode by a window that looked into the ravine, and a low door opened on the side next the valley. The construction was partly of stone and partly of logs, with a roof of bark and a chimney of mud and sticks.

One who, by his severe and gloomy brow, was a fit possessor of so secluded a tenement, was, at the hour named, seated on a stone at the most salient angle of the mountain, and at the place where the eye commanded the widest and least obstructed view of the abodes of man in the distance. Stones had been rolled together in a manner to form a little breastwork in his front, so that had there been any wandering gaze sweeping over the face of the mountain, it was far from probable that it would have detected the presence of a man whose whole form, with the exception of the superior parts, was so effectually concealed.

It would have been difficult to say whether this secluded being had thus placed himself in order to indulge in some habitual and fancied communication with the little world of the valley, or whether he sat at his post in watchfulness. There was an appearance of each of these occupations in his air; for a time his eye was melancholy and softened, as if his spirit found pleasure in the charities natural to the species; and at others, the brows contracted with sternness, while the lips became more than usually com

pressed, like those of a man who threw himself on his own innate resolution for support.

The solitude of the place, the air of universal quiet which reigned above, the boundless leafy carpet over which the eye looked from that elevated point, and the breathing stillness of the bosom of the woods, united to give grandeur to the scene. The figure of the tenant of the ravine was as immovable as any other object of the view. It seemed, in all but color and expression, of stone. An elbow was leaning on the little screen in front, and the head was supported by a hand. At the distance of an arrow's flight, the eye might readily have supposed it no more than another of the accidental imitations which had been worn in the rock by the changes of centuries. An hour passed, and scarce a limb had been changed or a muscle relieved. Either contemplation, or the patient awaiting of some looked-for event, appeared to suspend the ordinary functions of life. At length an interruption occurred to this extraordinary inaction. A rustling, not louder than that which would have been made by the leap of a squirrel, was first heard in the bushes above. It was succeeded by a crackling of branches, and then a fragment of rock came bounding down the precipice, until it shot over the head of the still motionless hermit, and fell, with a noise that drew a succession of echoes from the caverns of the place, into the ravine beneath.

Notwithstanding the suddenness of this interruption and the extraordinary fracas with which it was accompanied, he, who might be supposed to be most affected by it, manifested none of the usual symptoms of fear or surprise. He listened intently until the last sound had died away, but it was with expectation rather than with alarm. Arising slowly, he looked warily about him, and then walking with a quick step along the ledge which led to his hut, he disappeared through its door. In another minute, however, he was again seen at his former post, a short carbine, such as was then used by mounted warriors, lying across his knee. If doubt or perplexity beset the mind of this individual at so palpable a sign that the solitude he courted was in danger of being interrupted, it was not of a nature sufficiently strong to disturb the equanimity of his aspect. A second time the branches rustled, and the sounds proceeded from a lower part of the precipice, as if the foot that caused the disturbance was in the act of descending. Though no one was visible, the nature of the noise could

no longer be mistaken. It was evidently the tread of a human foot ; for no beast of a weight sufficient to produce so great an impression would have chosen to rove across a spot where the support of hands was nearly as necessary as that of the other limbs.

"Come forward!" said he who in all but the accessories of dress and hostile preparation might so well be termed a hermit—"I am already here."

The words were not given to the air, for one suddenly appeared on the ledge at the side next the settlement, and within twenty feet of the speaker. When glance met glance, the surprise which evidently took possession of the intruder and of him who appeared to claim a better right to be where they met, seemed mutual. The carbine of the latter, and a musket carried by the former, fell into the dangerous line of aim at the same instant, and in a moment they were thrown upwards again, as if a common impulse controlled them. The resident signed to the other to draw nigher, and then every appearance of hostility disappeared in that sort of familiarity which confidence begets.

"How is it," said the former to his guest, when both were calmly seated behind the little screen of stones, "that thou hast fallen upon the secret place? The foot of stranger hath not often trod these rocks, and no man before thee hath ever descended the precipice."

"A moccason is sure," returned the other with Indian brevity. "My father hath a good eye. He can see very far from the door of his lodge."

"Thou knowest that the men of my color speak often to their Great Spirit, and they do not love to ask his favor in the highways. This place is sacred to his holy name."

The intruder was the young Sachem of the Narragansetts, and he who, notwithstanding this plausible apology, so palpably sought secrecy rather than solitude, was the man that has so often been introduced into these pages under the shade of mystery. The instant recognition and the mutual confidence require no further explanation, since enough has already been developed in the course of the narrative to show that they were no strangers to each other. Still the meeting had not taken place without uneasiness on the one part, and great though admirably veiled surprise on the other. As became his high station and lofty character, the bearing of Conanchet betrayed none of the littleness of a vulgar curiosity. He met his ancient acquaint-

ance with the calm dignity of his rank, and it would have been difficult for the most inquiring eye to have detected a wandering glance, a single prying look, or any other sign that he deemed the place at all extraordinary for such an interview. He listened to the little explanation of the other with grave courtesy, and suffered a short time to elapse before he made any reply.

"The Manitou of the pale men," he then said, "should be pleased with my father. His words are often in the ears of the Great Spirit! The trees and the rocks know them."

"Like all of a sinful and fallen race," returned the stranger with the severe air of the age, "I have much need of my askings. But why dost thou think that my voice is so often heard in this secret place?"

The finger of Conanchet pointed to the worn rock at his feet, and his eye glanced furtively at the beaten path which led between the spot and the door of the lodge.

"A Yengeese hath a hard heel, but it is softer than stone. The hoof of the deer would pass many times to leave such a trail."

"Thou art quick of eye, Narragansett, and yet thy judgment may be deceived. My tongue is not the only one that speaketh to the God of my people."

The sachem bent his head slightly, in acquiescence, as if unwilling to press the subject. But his companion was not so easily satisfied, for he felt the consciousness of a fruitless attempt at deception goading him to some plausible means of quieting the suspicions of the Indian.

"That I am now alone, may be matter of pleasure or of accident," he added; "thou knowest that this hath been a busy and bloody day among the pale men, and there are dead and dying in their lodges. One who hath no wigwam of his own may have found time to worship by himself."

"The mind is very cunning," returned Conanchet; "it can hear when the ear is deaf—it can see when the eye is shut. My father hath spoken to the Good Spirit with the rest of his tribe."

As the chief concluded, he pointed significantly toward the distant church, out of which the excited congregation we have described was at that moment pouring into the green and little-trodden street of the hamlet. The other appeared to understand his meaning, and, at the same instant to feel the folly, as well as the uselessness, of attempt-

ing any longer to mislead one that already knew so much of his former mode of life.

"Indian, thou sayest true," he rejoined gloomily: "the mind seeth far, and it seeth often in the bitterness of sorrow. My spirit was communing with the spirits of those thou seest, when thy step was first heard; besides thine own, the feet of man never mounted to this place, except it be of those who minister to my bodily wants. Thou sayest true; the mental sight is keen; and far beyond those distant hills, on which the last rays of the setting sun are now shining so gloriously, doth mine often bear me in spirit. Thou wast once my fellow-lodger, youth, and much pleasure had I in striving to open thy young mind to the truths of our race, and to teach thee to speak with the tongue of a Christian; but years have passed away—hark! There cometh one up the path. Hast thou dread of a Yengeese?"

The calm mien with which Conanchet had been listening changed to a cold smile. His hand had felt for the lock of his musket, some time before his companion had betrayed any consciousness of the approaching footstep; but until questioned, no change of countenance was visible.

"Is my father afraid for his friend?" he asked, pointing in the direction of him who approached. "Is it an armed warrior?"

"No; he cometh with the means of sustaining a burden that must be borne, until it pleaseth Him who knoweth what is good for all his creatures to ease me of it. It may be the parent of her thou hast this day restored to her friends, or it may be the brother; for, at times, I owe this kindness to different members of that worthy family."

A look of intelligence shot across the swarthy features of the chief. His decision appeared taken. Arising, he left his weapon at the feet of his companion, and moved swiftly along the ledge, as if to meet the intruder. In another instant he returned, bearing a little bundle closely enveloped in belts of richly-beaded wampum. Placing the latter gently by the side of the old man, for time had changed the color of the solitary's hair to gray, he said, in a low, quick voice, pointing with significance at what he had done—

"The messenger will not go back with an empty hand. My father is wise; he will say what is good."

There was little time for further explanation. The door of the hut had scarcely closed on Conanchet, before Mark

Heathcote appeared at the point where the path bent around the angle of the precipice.

"Thou knowest what hath passed, and wilt suffer me to depart with brief discourse," said the young man, placing food at the feet of him he came to seek ; "ha ! what hast here ?—didst gain this in the fray of the morning ?"

"It is booty that I freely bestow ; take it to the house of thy father. It is left with that object. Now tell me of the manner in which death hath dealt with our people, for thou knowest that necessity drove me from among them, so soon as liberty was granted."

Mark showed no disposition to gratify the other's wish. He gazed on the bundle of Conanchet, as if his eye had never before looked on a similar object, and keenly contending passions were playing about a brow that was seldom as tranquil as suited the self-denying habits of the times and country.

"It shall be done, Narragansett !" he said, speaking between his clenched teeth ; "it shall be done !" Then turning on his heel, he stalked along the giddy path with a rapidity of stride that kept the other in fearful suspense for his safety, until his active form had disappeared.

The recluse arose and sought the occupant of his humble abode.

"Come forth," he said, opening the narrow door for the passage of the chief. "The youth hath departed with thy burden, and thou art now alone with an ancient associate."

Conanchet reappeared at the summons, but it was with an eye less glowing and a brow less stern than when he entered the little cabin. As he moved slowly to the stone he had before occupied, his step was arrested for a moment, and a look of melancholy regret seemed to be cast at the spot where he had laid the bundle. Conquering his feelings, however, in the habitual self-command of his people, he resumed his seat, with the air of one that was grave by nature, while he appeared to exert no effort in order to preserve the admirable equanimity of his features. A long and thoughtful silence succeeded, and then the solitary spoke.

"We have made a friend of the Narragansett chief," he said, "and this league with Philip is broken !"

"Yengeese," returned the other, "I am full of the blood of sachems."—

"Why should the Indian and the white do each other

this violence ? The earth is large, and there is place for men of all colors and of all nations on its surface."

"My father hath found but little," said the other, bestowing such a cautious glance at the narrow limits of his host, as at once betrayed the sarcastic purport of his words, while it equally bespoke the courtesy of his mind.

"A light-minded and vain prince is seated on the throne of a once godly nation, chief, and darkness has again come over a land which of late shone with a clear and shining light ! The just are made to flee from the habitations of their infancy, and the temples of the elect are abandoned to the abominations of idolatry. Oh, England ! England ! when will thy cup of bitterness be full ? When shall this judgment pass from thee ? My spirit groaneth over thy fall ; yea, my inmost soul is saddened with the spectacle of thy misery !"

Conanchet was too delicate to regard the glazed eye and flushed forehead of the speaker, but he listened in amazement and in ignorance. Such expressions had often met his ear before, and though his tender years had probably prevented their producing much effect, now that he again heard them in his manhood, they conveyed no intelligible meaning to his mind. Suddenly laying a finger on the knee of his companion, he said—

"The arm of my father was raised on the side of the Yengeese to-day ; yet they give him no seat at their council-fire !"

"The sinful man, who ruleth in the island whence my people came, hath an arm that is long as his mind is vain. Though debarred from the councils of this valley, chief, time hath been when my voice was heard in councils that struck heavily at the power of his race. These eyes have seen justice done on him who gave existence to the double-tongued instrument of Belial, that now governeth a rich and glorious realm !"

"My father hath taken the scalp of a great chief !"

"I helped to take his head !" returned the solitary, a ray of bitter exultation gleaming through the habitual austerity of his brow.

"Come ! The eagle flies above the clouds that he may move his wings freely. The panther leaps longest on the widest plain ; the biggest fish swim in the deep water. My father cannot stretch himself between these rocks. He is too big to lie down in a little wigwam. The woods are wide ; let him change the color of his skin, and be a gray-

head at the council-fire of my nation. The warriors will listen to what he says, for his hand hath done a strong deed!"

"It may not be—it may not be, Narragansett. That which hath been generated in the spirit must abide, and it would be 'easier for the blackamoor to become white, or for the leopard to change his spots,' than for one who hath felt the power of the Lord to cast aside his gifts. But I meet thy proffers of amity in a charitable and forgiving spirit. My mind is ever with my people; yet is there place for other friendships. Break, then, this league with the evil-minded and turbulent Philip, and let the hatchet be forever buried in the path between thy village and the towns of the Yengeese."

"Where is my village? There is a dark place near the islands on the shores of the Great Lake; but I see no lodges."

"We will rebuild thy towns, and people them anew. Let there be peace between us."

"My mind is ever with my people," returned the Indian, repeating the other's words with an emphasis that could not be mistaken.

A long and melancholy pause succeeded; and when the conversation was renewed, it had reference to those events which had taken place in the fortunes of each since the time when they were both tenants of the block-house that stood amid the ancient habitations of the Heathcotes. Each appeared too well to comprehend the character of the other to attempt any further efforts toward producing a change of purpose; and darkness had gathered about the place before they arose to enter the hut of the solitary.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Sleep, thou hast been a grandsire, and begot
A father to me; and thou hast created
A mother and two brothers."—*Cymbeline*.

THE short twilight was already passed when old Mark Heathcote ended the evening prayer. The mixed character of the remarkable events of that day had given birth to a feeling which could find no other relief than that which flowed from the usual zealous, confiding, and exalted out-

pouring of the spirit. On the present occasion he had even resorted to an extraordinary, and what one less devout might be tempted to think, a supererogatory offering of thanksgiving and praise. After dismissing the attendants of the establishment, supported by the arm of his son, he had withdrawn into an inner apartment, and there, surrounded only by those who had the nearest claims on his affections, the old man again raised his voice to laud the Being who, in the midst of so much general grief, had deigned to look upon his particular race with the eyes of remembrance and of favor. He spoke of his recovered grandchild by name, and he dealt with the whole subject of her captivity among the heathen, and her restoration to the foot of the altar, with the fervor of one who saw the wise decrees of Providence in the event, and with the tenderness of sentiment that age was far from having extinguished. It was at the close of this private and peculiar worship, that we return into the presence of the family.

The spirit of reform had driven those who so violently felt its influence into many usages that, to say the least, were quite as ungracious to the imagination, as the customs they termed idolatrous were obnoxious to the attacks of their own unaccommodating theories. The first Protestants had expelled so much from the service of the altar, that little was left for the Puritan to destroy, without incurring the risk of leaving it naked of its loveliness. By a strange substitution of subtlety for humility, it was thought pharisaical to bend the knee in public, lest the great essential of spiritual worship might be supplanted by the more attainable merit of formula; and while rigid aspects and prescribed deportments of a new character were observed with all the zeal of converts, ancient and even natural practices were condemned—chiefly, we believe, from that necessity of innovation which appears to be an unavoidable attendant of all plans of improvement, whether they are successful or the reverse. But though the Puritans refused to bow their stubborn limbs when the eye of man was on them, even while asking boons suited to their own sublimated opinions, it was permitted to assume in private an attitude which was thought to admit of so gross an abuse, inasmuch as it infers a claim to a religious vitality, while in truth the soul might only be slumbering in the security of mere moral pretension.

On the present occasion, they who worshipped in secret had bent their bodies to the humblest posture of devotion.

When Ruth Heathcote arose from her knees, it was with a hand clasped in that of the child whom her recent devotion was well suited to make her think had been rescued from a condition far more gloomy than that of the grave. She had used a gentle violence to force the wondering being at her side to join, so far as externals could go, in the prayer ; and now it was ended, she sought the countenance of her daughter, in order to read the impression the scene had produced, with all the solicitude of a Christian, heightened by the tenderest maternal love.

Narra-mattah, as we shall continue to call her, in air, expression, and attitude, resembled one who had a fancied existence in the delusion of some exciting dream. Her ear remembered sounds which had so often been repeated in her infancy, and her memory recalled indistinct recollections of most of the objects and usages that were so suddenly replaced before her eyes ; but the former now conveyed their meaning to a mind that had gained its strength under a very different system of theology, and the latter came too late to supplant usages that were rooted in her affections by the aid of all those wild and seductive habits, that are known to become nearly unconquerable in those who have long been subject to their influence. She stood, therefore, in the centre of the grave, self-restrained group of her nearest kin, like an alien to their blood, resembling some timid and but half-tamed tenant of the air, that human art had endeavored to domesticate, by placing it in the society of the more tranquil and confiding inhabitants of the aviary.

Notwithstanding the strength of her affections, and her devotion to all the natural duties of her station, Ruth Heathcote was not now to learn the manner in which she was to subdue any violence in their exhibition. The first indulgence of joy and gratitude was over, and in its place appeared the never-tiring, vigilant, engrossing, but regulated watchfulness, which the events would naturally create. The doubts, misgivings, and even fearful apprehensions that beset her, were smothered in an appearance of satisfaction ; and something like gleamings of happiness were again seen playing about a brow that had so long been clouded with an unobtrusive but corroding care.

"And thou recallest thine infancy, my Ruth?" asked the mother, when the respectful period of silence which ever succeeded prayer in that family was passed ; "thy thoughts have not been altogether strangers to us, but

nature hath had its place in thy heart. Tell us, child, of thy wanderings in the forest, and of the suffering that one so tender must have undergone among a barbarous people. There is pleasure in listening to all thou hast seen and felt, now that we know there is an end to unhappiness."

She spoke to an ear that was deaf to language like this. Narra-mattah evidently understood her words, while their meaning was wrapped in an obscurity that she was neither desirous nor capable of comprehending. Keeping a gaze, in which pleasure and wonder were powerfully blended, on that soft look of affection which beamed from her mother's eye, she felt hurriedly among the folds of her dress, and drawing a belt that was gayly ornamented after the most ingenious fashion of her adopted people, she approached her half-pleased, half-distressed parent, and with hands that trembled equally with timidity and pleasure, she arranged it around her person in a manner to show its richness to the best advantage. Pleased with her performance, the artless being eagerly sought approbation in eyes that bespoke little else than regret. Alarmed at an expression she could not translate, the gaze of Narra-mattah wandered, as if it sought support against some sensation to which she was a stranger. Whittal Ring had stolen into the room, and missing the customary features of her own cherished home, the looks of the startled creature rested on the countenance of the witless wanderer. She pointed eagerly at the work of her hands, appealing by an eloquent and artless gesture to the taste of one who should know whether she had done well.

"Bravely!" returned Whittal, approaching nearer to the subject of his admiration—" 'tis a brave belt, and none but the wife of a sachem could make so rare a gift!"

The girl folded her arms meekly on her bosom, and again appeared satisfied with herself and with the world.

"Here is the hand of him visible who dealeth in all wickedness," said the Puritan. "To corrupt the heart with vanities, and to mislead the affections by luring them to the things of life, is the guile in which he delighteth. A fallen nature lendeth but too ready aid. We must deal with the child in fervor and watchfulness, or better that her bones were lying by the side of those little ones of thy flock, who are already inheritors of the promise."

Respect kept Ruth silent; but while she sorrowed over the ignorance of her child, natural affection was strong at her heart. With the tact of a woman and the tenderness

of a mother, she both saw and felt that severity was not the means to effect the improvement they desired. Taking a seat herself, she drew her child to her person, and first imploring silence by a glance at those around her, she proceeded, in a manner that was dictated by the mysterious influence of nature, to fathom the depth of her daughter's mind.

"Come nearer, Narra-mattah," she said, using the name to which the other would alone answer. "Thou art still in thy youth, my child ; but it hath pleased Him whose will is law, to have made thee the witness of many changes in this varying life. Tell me if thou recallest the days of infancy, and if thy thoughts ever returned to thy father's house, during those weary years thou wast kept from our view ?"

Ruth used gentle force to draw her daughter nearer while speaking, and the latter sank into that posture from which she had just arisen, kneeling, as she had often done in infancy, at her mother's side. The attitude was too full of tender recollections not to be grateful, and the half-alarmed being of the forest was suffered to retain it during most of the dialogue that followed. But while she was thus obedient in person, by the vacancy or rather wonder of an eye that was so eloquent to express all the emotions and knowledge of which she was the mistress, Narra-mattah plainly manifested that little more than the endearment of her mother's words and manner was intelligible. Ruth saw the meaning of her hesitation, and smothering the pang it caused, she endeavored to adapt her language to the habits of one so artless.

"Even the gray heads of thy people were once young," she resumed ; "and they remember the lodges of their fathers. Does my daughter ever think of the time when she played among the children of the pale-faces ?"

The attentive being at the knee of Ruth listened greedily. Her knowledge of the language of her childhood had been sufficiently implanted before her captivity, and it had been too often exercised by intercourse with the whites, and more particularly with Whittal Ring, to leave her in any doubt of the meaning of what she now heard. Stealing a timid look over a shoulder, she sought the countenance of Martha, and studying her lineaments for near a minute with intense regard, she laughed aloud in the contagious merriment of an Indian girl.

"Thou hast not forgotten us ! That glance at her who

was the companion of thy infancy assures me, and we shall soon again possess our Ruth in affection as we now possess her in the body. I will not speak to thee of that fearful night when the violence of the savage robbed us of thy presence, nor of the bitter sorrow which beset us at thy loss; but there is One who must still be known to thee, my child; he who sitteth above the clouds, who holdeth the earth in the hollow of his hand, and who looketh in mercy on all that journey on the path to which his own finger pointeth. Hath he yet a place in thy thoughts? Thou rememberest His Holy Name, and still thinkest of his power?"

The listener bent her head aside, as if to catch the full meaning of what she heard, the shadows of deep reverence passing over a face that had so lately been smiling. After a pause she audibly murmured the word—

"Manitou."

"Manitou, or Jehovah; God, or King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! it mattereth little which term is used to express his power. Thou knowest him then, and hast never ceased to call upon his name?"

"Narra-mattah is a woman. She is afraid to speak to the Manitou aloud. He knows the voices of the chiefs, and opens his ears when they ask help."

The Puritan groaned, but Ruth succeeded in quelling her own anguish, lest she should disturb the reviving confidence of her daughter.

"This may be the Manitou of an Indian," she said, "but it is not the Christian's God. Thou art of a race which worships differently, and it is proper that thou shouldst call on the name of the Deity of thy fathers. Even the Narragansett teacheth this truth! Thy skin is white, and thy ears should hearken to the traditions of the men of thy blood."

The head of the daughter drooped at this allusion to her color, as if she would fain conceal the mortifying truth from every eye; but she had not time for answer ere Whittal Ring drew near, and pointing to the burning color of her cheeks, that were deepened as much with shame as with the heats of an American sun, he said—

"The wife of the sachem hath begun to change. She will soon be like Nipset—all red. See," he added, laying a finger on a part of his own arm, where the sun and the winds had not yet destroyed the original color; "the Evil Spirit poured water into his blood too, but it will come out

again. As soon as he is so dark that the Evil Spirit will not know him, he will go on the war-path, and then the lying pale-faces may dig up the bones of their fathers and move toward the sunrise, or his lodge will be lined with hair of the color of a deer!"

"And thou, my daughter! canst thou hear this threat against the people of thy nation—of thy blood—of thy God, without a shudder?"

The eye of Narra-mattah seemed in doubt; still it regarded Whittal with its accustomed look of kindness. The innocent, full of his imaginary glory, raised his hand in exultation, and by gestures that could not easily be misunderstood, he indicated the manner in which he intended to rob his victims of the usual trophy. While the youth was enacting the disgusting but expressive pantomime, Ruth watched the countenance of her child in nearly breathless agony. She would have been relieved by a single glance of disapprobation, by a solitary movement of a rebellious muscle, or by the smallest sign that the tender nature of one so lovely, and otherwise so gentle, revolted at so unequivocal evidence of the barbarous practices of her adopted people. But no empress of Rome could have witnessed the dying agonies of the hapless gladiator, no consort of a more modern prince could read the bloody list of the victims of her husband's triumph, nor any betrothed fair listen to the murderous deeds of him her imagination had painted as a hero, with less indifference to human suffering than that with which the wife of the Sachem of the Narragansetts looked on the mimic representation of those exploits which had purchased for her husband a renown so highly prized. It was but too apparent that the representation, rude and savage as it was, conveyed to her mind nothing but pictures in which the chosen companion of a warrior should rejoice. The varying features and answering eye too plainly proclaimed the sympathy of one taught to exult in the success of the combatant; and when Whittal, excited by his own exertions, broke out into an exhibition of a violence more ruthless even than common, he was openly rewarded by another laugh. The soft, exquisitely feminine tones of this involuntary burst of pleasure sounded in the ears of Ruth like a knell over the moral beauty of her child. Still subduing her feelings, she passed a hand thoughtfully over her own pallid brow, and appeared to muse long on the desolation of a mind that had once promised to be so pure.

The colonists had not yet severed all those natural ties which bound them to the eastern hemisphere. Their legends, their pride, and in many instances their memories, aided in keeping alive a feeling of amity, and it might be added of faith, in favor of the land of their ancestors. With some of their descendants, even to the present hour, the *beau-ideal* of excellence, in all that pertains to human qualities and human happiness, is connected with the images of the country from which they sprang. Distance is known to cast a softening mist, equally over the moral and physical vision. The blue outline of mountain which melts into its glowing background of sky, is not more pleasing than the pictures which fancy sometimes draws of less material things ; but, as he comes near, the disappointed traveller too often finds nakedness and deformity, where he so fondly imagined beauty only was to be seen. No wonder then that the dwellers of the simple provinces of New England blended recollections of the country they still called home, with most of their poetical pictures of life. They retained the language, the books, and most of the habits, of the English. But different circumstances, divided interests, and peculiar opinions, were gradually beginning to open those breaches which time has since widened, and which promise soon to leave little in common between the two peoples, except the same forms of speech and a common origin ; it is to be hoped that some charity may be blended with these ties.

The singularly restrained habits of the religionists, throughout the whole of the British provinces, were in marked opposition to the mere embellishments of life. The arts were permitted only as they served its most useful and obvious purposes. With them, music was confined to the worship of God, and, for a long time after the original settlement, the song was never known to lead the mind astray from what was conceived to be the one great object of existence. No verse was sung but such as blended holy ideas with the pleasures of harmony ; nor were the sounds of revelry ever heard within their borders. Still, words adapted to their peculiar condition had come into use, and though poetry was neither a common nor a brilliant property of the mind, among a people thus disciplined to ascetic practices, it early exhibited its power in quaint versification, that was always intended, though with a success it is almost pardonable to doubt, to redound to the glory of the Deity. It was but a natural enlargement of this

pious practice, to adapt some of these spiritual songs to purposes of the nursery.

When Ruth Heathcote passed her hand thoughtfully across her brow, it was with a painful conviction that her dominion over the mind of her child was sadly weakened, if not lost forever. But the efforts of maternal love are not easily repulsed. An idea flashed upon her brain, and she proceeded to try the efficacy of the experiment it suggested. Nature had endowed her with a melodious voice, and an ear that taught her to regulate sounds in a manner that seldom failed to touch the heart. She possessed the genius of music, which is melody, unweakened by those exaggerated affectations with which it is often encumbered by what is pretendingly called science. Drawing her daughter nearer to her knee, she commenced one of the songs then much used by the mothers of the colony, her voice scarcely rising above the whispering of the evening air, in its first notes, but gradually gaining, as she proceeded, the richness and compass that a strain so simple required.

At the first low breathing notes of this nursery song, Narra-mattah became as motionless as if her rounded and unfettered form had been wrought in marble. Pleasure lighted her eyes, as strain succeeded strain; and ere the second verse was ended, her look, her attitude, and every muscle of her ingenuous features, were eloquent in the expression of delight. Ruth did not hazard the experiment without trembling for its result. Emotion imparted feeling to the music, and when, for the third time in the course of her song, she addressed her child, she saw the soft blue eyes that gazed wistfully on her face swimming in tears. Encouraged by this unequivocal evidence of success, nature grew still more powerful in its efforts, and the closing verse was sung to an ear that nestled near her heart, as it had often done during the early years of Narra-mattah while listening to its melancholy melody.

Content was a quiet but an anxious witness of this touching evidence of a reviving intelligence between his wife and child. He best understood the look that beamed in the eyes of the former, while her arms were, with extreme caution, folded around her who still leaned upon her bosom, as if fearful one so timid might be frightened from her security by any sudden or unaccustomed interruption. A minute passed in the deepest silence. Even Whittall Ring was lulled into quiet, and long and sorrowing years

had passed since Ruth enjoyed moments of happiness so pure and unalloyed. The stillness was broken by a heavy step in the outer room ; a door was thrown open by a hand more violent than common, and then young Mark appeared, his face flushed with exertion, his brow seemingly retaining the frown of battle, and with a tread that betrayed a spirit goaded by some fierce and unwelcome passion. The burden of Canonchet was on his arm. He laid it upon a table ; then pointing, in a manner that appeared to challenge attention, he turned, and left the room as abruptly as he had entered.

A cry of joy burst from the lips of Narra-mattah, the instant the beaded belts caught her eye. The arms of Ruth relaxed their hold in surprise, and before amazement had time to give place to more connected ideas, the wild being at her knee had flown to the table, returned, resumed her former posture, opened the folds of the cloth, and was holding before the bewildered gaze of her mother the patient features of an Indian babe.

It would exceed the powers of the unambitious pen we wield, to convey to the reader a just idea of the mixed emotions that struggled for mastery in the countenance of Ruth. The innate and never-dying sentiment of maternal joy was opposed by all those feelings of pride, that prejudice could not fail to implant even in the bosom of one so meek. There was no need to tell the history of the parentage of the little suppliant, who already looked up into her face with that peculiar calm which renders his race so remarkable. Though its glance was weakened by infancy, the dark glittering eye of Conanchet was there ; there were also to be seen the receding forehead and the compressed lip of the father ; but all these marks of his origin were softened by touches of that beauty which had rendered the infancy of her own child so remarkable.

"See !" said Narra-mattah, raising the infant still nearer to the riveted gaze of Ruth ; "'tis a sachem of the red men ! The little eagle hath left his nest too soon."

Ruth could not resist the appeal of her beloved. Bending her head low, so as entirely to conceal her own flushed face, she imprinted a kiss on the forehead of the Indian boy. But the jealous eye of the young mother was not to be deceived. Narra-mattah detected the difference between the cold salute and those fervent embraces she had herself received, and disappointment produced a chill about her own heart. Replacing the folds of the cloth

with quiet dignity, she arose from her knees and withdrew in sadness to a distant corner of the room. There she took a seat, and with a glance that might almost be termed reproachful, she commenced a low Indian song to her infant.

"The wisdom of Providence is in this as in all its dispensations," whispered Content, over the shoulder of his nearly insensible partner. "Had we received her as she was lost, the favor might have exceeded our deservings. Our daughter is grieved that thou turnest a cold eye on her babe."

The appeal was sufficient for one whose affections had been wounded rather than chilled. It recalled Ruth to recollection, and it served at once to dissipate the shades of regret that had been unconsciously permitted to gather around her brow. The displeasure, or it would be more true to term it sorrow, of the young mother was easily appeased. A smile on her infant brought the blood back to her heart in a swift and tumultuous current; and Ruth herself soon forgot that she had any reason for regret in the innocent delight with which her own daughter now hastened to display the physical excellence of the boy. From this scene of natural feeling, Content was too quickly summoned by the intelligence that some one without awaited his presence on business of the last importance to the welfare of the settlement.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"It will have blood; they say, blood
Will have blood!"—*Macbeth*.

THE visitors were Dr. Ergot, the Reverend Meek Wolfe, Ensign Dudley, and Reuben Ring. Content found these four individuals seated in an outer room, in a grave and restrained manner, that would have done no discredit to the self-command of an Indian council. He was saluted with those staid and composed greetings which are still much used in the intercourse of the people of the Eastern States of this Republic, and which have obtained for them a reputation, where they are little known, of a want of the more active charities of our nature. But that was peculiarly the age of sublimated doctrines, of self-mortification,

and of severe moral government, and most men believe it a merit to exhibit, on all occasions, the dominion of the mind over the mere animal impulses. The usage, which took its rise in exalted ideas of spiritual perfection, has since grown into a habit, which, though weakened by the influence of the age, still exists to a degree that often leads to an erroneous estimate of character.

At the entrance of the master of the house, there was some such decorous silence as that which is known to precede the communications of the aborigines. At length Ensign Dudley, in whom matter, most probably in consequence of its bulk, bore more than a usual proportion to his less material part, manifested some evidences of impatience that the divine should proceed to business. Thus admonished, or possibly conceiving that a sufficient concession had been made to the dignity of man's nature, Meek opened his mouth to speak.

"Captain Content Heathcote," he commenced, with that mystical involution of his subject which practice had rendered nearly inseparable from all his communications; "Captain Content Heathcote, this hath been a day of awful visitations, and of gracious temporal gifts. The heathen hath been smitten severely by the hand of the believer, and the believer hath been made to pay the penalty of his want of faith, by the infliction of a savage agency. Azazel hath been loosened in our village, the legions of wickedness have been suffered to go at large in our fields, and yet the Lord hath remembered his people, and hath borne them through a trial of blood as perilous as was the passage of his chosen nation through the billows of the Red Sea. There is cause of mourning, and cause of joy, in this manifestation of his will; of sorrow that we have merited his anger, and of rejoicing that enough of redeeming grace hath been found to save the Gomorrah of our hearts. But I speak to one trained in spiritual discipline, and schooled in the vicissitudes of the world, and further discourse is not necessary to quicken his apprehension. We will therefore turn to more instant and temporal exercises. Have all of thy household escaped unharmed throughout the strivings of this bloody day?"

"We praise the Lord that such hath been his pleasure," returned Content. "Other than as sorrow hath assailed us through the mourning of friends, the blow hath fallen lightly on me and mine."

"Thou hast had thy season; the parent ceaseth to chas-

tise, while former punishments are remembered. But here is Sergeant Ring, with matter to communicate, that may still leave business for thy courage and thy wisdom."

Content turned his quiet look upon the yeoman, and seemed to await his speech. Reuben Ring, who was a man of many solid and valuable qualities, would most probably have been exercising the military functions of his brother-in-law at that very moment, had he been equally gifted with a fluent discourse. But his feats lay rather in doing than in speaking, and the tide of popularity had in consequence set less strongly in his favor than might have happened had the reverse been the case. The present, however, was a moment when it was necessary to overcome his natural reluctance to speak, and it was not long before he replied to the inquiring glance of his commander's eye.

"The captain knows the manner in which we scourged the savages at the southern end of the valley," the sturdy yeoman began, "and it is not necessary to deal with the particulars at length. There were six-and-twenty redskins slain in the meadows, besides as many more that left the ground in the arms of their friends. As for the people, we got a few hurts, but each man came back on his own limbs."

"This is much as the matter hath been reported."

"Then there was a party sent to brush the woods on the trail of the Indians," resumed Reuben, without appearing to regard the interruption. "The scouts broke off in pairs in the duty, and finally men got to searching singly, of which number I was one. The two men of whom there is question——"

"Of what men dost speak?" demanded Content.

"The two men of whom there is question," returned the other, continuing the direct course of his own manner of relating events, without appearing to see the necessity of connecting the threads of his communication; "the men of whom I have spoken to the minister and the ensign——"

"Proceed," said Content, who understood his man.

"After one of these men was brought to his end, I saw no reason for making the day bloodier than it already was, the more especially as the Lord had caused it to begin with a merciful hand, which shed its bounties on my own dwelling. Under such an opinion of right-doing the other was bound and led into the clearings."

"Thou hast made a captive?"

The lips of Reuben scarce severed as he muttered a low assent; but the Ensign Dudley took upon himself the duty of entering into further explanations, which the point where his kinsman left the narrative enabled him to do with sufficient intelligence.

"As the sergeant hath related," he said, "one of the heathen fell, and the other is now without, awaiting a judgment in the matter of his fortune."

"I trust there is no wish to harm him," said Content, glancing an eye uneasily around at his companions. "Strife hath done enough in our settlement this day. The sergeant hath a right to claim the scalp-bounty, for the man that is slain; but for him that liveth, let there be mercy!"

"Mercy is a quality of heavenly origin," replied Meek Wolfe, "and it should not be perverted to defeat the purposes of heavenly wisdom. Azazel must not triumph, though the tribe of the Narragansetts should be swept with the besom of destruction. Truly, we are an erring and a fallible race, Captain Heathcote; and the greater, therefore, the necessity that we submit without rebellion to the inward monitors that are implanted, by grace, to teach us the road of our duty——"

"I cannot consent to shed blood, now that the strife hath ceased," hastily interrupted Content. "Praised be Providence! we are victors; and it is time to lean to counsels of charity."

"Such are the deceptions of a short-sighted wisdom!" returned the divine, his dim, sunken eye shining with the promptings of an exaggerated and subtle spirit. "The end of all is good, and we may not, without mortal danger, presume to doubt the suggestions of heavenly gifts. But there is no question here concerning the execution of the captive, since he proffereth to be of service in far greater things than any that can depend on his life or his death. The heathen rendered up his liberty with little struggle, and hath propositions that may lead us to a profitable conclusion of this day's trials."

"If he can aid in aught that shall shorten the perils and wantonness of this ruthless war, he shall find none better disposed to listen than I."

"He professeth ability to do that service."

"Then, of Heaven's mercy! let him be brought forth, that we counsel on his proposals."

Meek made a gesture to Sergeant Ring, who quitted the apartment for a moment; and shortly after, returned followed by his captive. The Indian was one of those dark and malignant-looking savages that possess most of the sinister properties of their condition, with few or none of the redeeming qualities. His eye was lowering and distrustful, bespeaking equally apprehension and revenge ; his form of that middling degree of perfection which leaves as little to admire as to condemn, and his attire such as denoted him one who might be ranked among the warriors of a secondary class. Still, in the composure of his mien, the tranquillity of his step, and the self-possession of all his movements, he displayed that high bearing, his people rarely fail to exhibit, ere too much intercourse with the whites begins to destroy their distinctive traits.

"Here is the Narragansett," said Reuben Ring, causing his prisoner to appear in the centre of the room ; "he is no chief, as may be gathered from his uncertain look."

"If he effect that of which there hath been question, his rank mattereth little. We seek to stop the currents of blood that flow like running water, in these devoted colonies."

"This will he do," rejoined the divine, "or we shall hold him answerable for breach of promise."

"And in what doth he profess to aid in stopping the work of death?"

"By yielding the fierce Philip, and his savage ally, the roving Conanchet, to the judgment. Those chiefs destroyed, our temple may be entered in peace, and the voice of thanksgiving shall again rise in our Bethel, without the profane interruption of savage shrieks."

Content started, and even recoiled a step, as he listened to the nature of the proposed peace-offering.

"And have we warranty for such a proceeding, should this man prove true?" he asked, in a voice that sufficiently denoted his own doubts of the propriety of such a measure.

"There is the law, the necessities of a suffering nature, and God's glory, for our justification," dryly returned the divine.

"This outsteppeth the discreet exercise of a delegated authority. I like not to assume so great power, without written mandates for its execution."

"The objection hath raised a little difficulty in my own mind," observed Ensign Dudley ; "and as it hath set

thoughts at work, it is possible that what I have to offer will meet the captain's good approbation."

Content knew that his ancient servitor was, though often uncouth in its exhibition, at the bottom a man of humane heart. On the other hand, while he scarce admitted the truth to himself, he had a secret dread of the exaggerated sentiments of his spiritual guide; and he consequently listened to the interruption of Eben with a gratification he scarcely wished to conceal.

"Speak openly," he said; "when men counsel in a matter of this weight, each standeth on the surety of his proper gifts."

"Then may this business be dispatched without the embarrassment the captain seems to dread. We have an Indian, who offers to lead a party through the forests to the haunts of the bloody chiefs, therein bringing affairs to the issue of manhood and discretion."

"And wherein do you propose any departure from the suggestions that have already been made?"

Ensign Dudley had not risen to his present rank without acquiring a suitable portion of the reserve which is so often found to dignify official sentiments. Having ventured the opinion already placéd, however vaguely, before his hearers, he was patiently awaiting its effects on the mind of his superior, when the latter, by his earnest and unsuspecting countenance, no less than by the question just given, showed that he was still in the dark as to the expedient the subaltern wished to suggest.

"I think there will be no necessity for making more captives," resumed Eben, "since the one we have appears to create difficulties in our councils. If there be any law in the colony which says that men must strike with a gentle hand in open battle, it is a law but little spoken of in common discourse; and though no pretender to the wisdom of legislators, I will make bold to add, it is a law that may as well be forgotten until this outbreking of the savages shall be quelled."

"We deal with an enemy that never stays his hand at the cry of mercy," observed Meek Wolfe, "and though charity be the fruit of Christian qualities, there is a duty greater than any which belongeth to earth. We are no more than weak and feeble instruments in the hands of Providence, and as such our minds should not be hardened to our inward promptings. If evidence of better feeling could be found in the deeds of the heathen, we might raise our hopes

to the completion of things; but the Powers of Darkness still rage in their hearts, and we are taught to believe that the tree is known by its fruits."

Content signed to all to await his return, and left the room. In another minute he was seen leading his daughter into the centre of the circle. The half-alarmed young woman clasped her swaddled boy to her bosom, as she gazed timidly at the grave faces of the borderers; and her eye recoiled in fear, when its hurried glance met the sunken, glazed, excited, and yet equivocal-looking organ of the Reverend Mr. Wolfe.

"Thou hast said that the savage never hearkens to the cry of mercy," resumed Content; "here is living evidence that thou hast spoken in error. The misfortune that early befell my family is not unknown to any in this settlement; thou seest in this trembling creature the daughter of our love—her we have so long mourned. The wept of my household is again with us; our hearts have been oppressed, they are now gladdened. God hath returned our child!"

There was deep, rich pathos in the tones of the father that affected most of his auditors, though each manifested his sensibilities in a manner suited to his peculiar habits of mind. The nature of the divine was touched, and all the energies of his severe principles were wanting to sustain him above the manifestation of a weakness that he might have believed derogatory to his spiritual exaltation of character. He therefore sat mute, with hands folded on his knee, betraying the struggles of an awakened sympathy only by a firmer compression of the interlocked fingers, and an occasional and involuntary movement of the stronger muscles of the face. Dudley suffered a smile of pleasure to lighten his broad, open countenance; and the physician, who had hitherto been merely a listener, uttered a few low syllables of admiration of the physical perfection of the being before him, with which there was mingled some evidence of natural good feeling.

Reuben Ring was the only individual who openly betrayed the whole degree of the interest he took in the restoration of the lost female. The stout yeoman arose, and moving to the entranced Narra-mattah, he took the infant into his large hands, and for a moment the honest borderer gazed at the boy with a wistful and softened eye. Then raising the diminutive face of the infant to his own expanded and bold features, he touched his cheek with

his lips, and returned the babe to its mother, who witnessed the whole proceeding in some such tribulation as the startled wren exhibits when the foot of the urchin is seen to draw too near the nest of its young.

"Thou seest that the hand of the Narragansett hath been stayed," said Content, when a deep silence had succeeded this little movement, and speaking in a tone which betrayed hopes of victory.

"The ways of Providence are mysterious!" returned Meek; "wherein they bring comfort to the heart, it is right that we exhibit gratitude; and wherein they are charged with the present affliction, it is meet to bow with humbled spirits to their orderings. But the visitations on families are merely——"

He paused, for at that moment a door opened, and a party entered bearing a burden, which they deposited with decent and grave respect on the floor in the very centre of the room. The unceremonious manner of the entrance, the assured and the common gravity of their air, proclaimed that the villagers felt their errand to be a sufficient apology for this intrusion. Had not the business of the past day naturally led to such a belief, the manner and aspects of those who had borne the burden would have announced it to be a human body.

"I had believed that none fell in this day's strife, but those who met their end near my own door," said Content, after a long, respectful, and sorrowing pause. "Remove the face-cloth that we may know on whom the blow hath fallen."

One of the young men obeyed. It was not easy to recognize through the mutilations of savage barbarity the features of the sufferer. But a second and steadier look showed the gory and still agonized countenance of the individual who had that morning left the Wish-Ton-Wish on the message of the colonial authorities. Even men as practised as those present in the horrible inventions of Indian cruelty, turned sickening away from a spectacle that was calculated to chill the blood of all who had not become callous to human affliction. Content made a sign to cover the miserable remnants of mortality, and hid his face with a shudder.

It is not necessary to dwell on the scene that followed. Meek Wolfe availed himself of this unexpected event to press his plan on the attention of the commanding officer of the settlement, who was certainly far better disposed to listen to his proposals, than before this palpable evidence

of the ruthless character of their enemies was presented to his view. Still Content listened with reluctance, nor was it without the intention of exercising an ulterior discretion in the case, that he finally consented to give orders for the departure of a body of men with the approach of the morning light. As much of the discourse was managed with those half-intelligible allusions that distinguished men of their habits, it is probable that every individual present had his own particular views on the subject ; though it is certain one and all faithfully believed that he was solely influenced by a justifiable regard to his temporal interest, which was in some degree rendered still more praiseworthy by a reference to the service of his Divine Master.

As the party returned, Dudley lingered a moment alone with his former master. The face of the honest-meaning ensign was charged with more than its usual significance ; and he even paused a little after all were beyond hearing, ere he could muster resolution to propose the subject that was so evidently uppermost in his mind.

"Captain Content Heathcote," he at length commenced, "evil or good comes not alone in this life. Thou hast found her that was sought with so much pain and danger, but thou hast found with her more than a Christian gentleman can desire. I am a man of humble station, but I may make bold to know what should be the feelings of a father whose child is restored, replenished by such an over-bountiful gift."

"Speak plainer," said Content, firmly.

"Then I would say, that it may not be grateful to one who taketh his place among the best in this colony, to have an offspring with an Indian cross of blood, and over whose birth no rite of Christian marriage hath been said. Here is Abundance, a woman of exceeding usefulness in a newly settled region, hath made Reuben a gift of three noble boys this very morning. The accession is little known, and less discoursed of, in that the good wife is accustomed to such liberality, and that the day hath brought forth still greater events. Now a child more or less to such a woman, can neither raise question among the neighbors, nor make any extraordinary difference to the household. My brother Ring would be happy to add the boy to his stock ; and should there be any remarks concerning the color of the youngster, at a future day, it should give no reason of surprise had the whole four been born, on the day of such an inroad, red as Metacom himself !"

Content heard his companion to the end without interruption. His countenance, for a single instant, as the meaning of the ensign became unequivocal, reddened with a worldly feeling to which he had long been a stranger; but the painful expression as quickly disappeared, and in its place reigned the meek submission to Providence that habitually characterized his mien.

"That I have been troubled with this vain thought I shall not deny," he answered; "but the Lord hath given me strength to resist. It is his will that one sprung of heathen lineage shall come beneath my roof, and let his will be done! My child and all that are hers are welcome."

Ensign Dudley pressed the point no further, and they separated.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Tarry a little;—there is something else."

—*Merchant of Venice.*

WE shift the scene. The reader will transport himself from the valley of the Wish-Ton-Wish to the bosom of a deep and dark wood.

It may be thought that such scenes have been too often described to need any repetition. Still, as it is possible that these pages may fall into the hands of some who have never quitted the older members of the Union, we shall endeavor to give them a faint impression concerning the appearance of the place to which it has become our duty to transfer the action of the tale.

Although it is certain that inanimate, like animate nature, has its period, the existence of the tree has no fixed and common limit. The oak, the elm, and the linden, the quick-growing sycamore and the tall pine, has each its own laws for the government of its growth, its magnitude, and its duration. By this provision of nature, the wilderness, in the midst of so many successive changes, is always maintained at the point nearest to perfection, since the accessions are so few and gradual as to preserve its character.

The American forest exhibits in the highest degree the grandeur of repose. As nature never does violence to its own laws, the soil throws out the plant which it is best qualified to support, and the eye is not often disappointed

by a sickly vegetation. There ever seems a generous emulation in the trees, which is not to be found among others of different families, when left to pursue their quiet existence in the solitude of the fields. Each struggles toward the light, and an equality in bulk and a similarity in form are thus produced, which scarce belong to their distinctive characters. The effect may be easily imagined. The vaulted arches beneath are filled with thousands of high, unbroken columns, which sustain one vast and trembling canopy of leaves. A pleasing gloom and an imposing silence have their interminable reign below, while an outer and another atmosphere seems to rest on the cloud of foliage.

While the light plays on the varying surface of the tree-tops, one sombre and little-varied hue colors the earth. Dead and moss-covered logs ; mounds covered with decomposed vegetable substances, the graves of long-past generations of trees ; cavities left by the fall of some uprooted trunk ; dark fungi, that flourish around the decayed roots of those about to lose their hold, with a few slender and delicate plants of a minor growth, and which best succeed in the shade, form the accompaniments of the lower scene. The whole is tempered, and in summer rendered grateful, by a freshness which equals that of the subterranean vault, without possessing any of its chilling dampness. In the midst of this gloomy solitude the foot of man is rarely heard. An occasional glimpse of the bounding deer or trotting moose is almost the only interruption on the earth itself ; while the heavy bear or leaping panther is, at long intervals, met seated on the branches of some venerable tree. There are moments, too, when troops of hungry wolves are found hunting on the trail of the deer ; but these are seen rather as exceptions to the stillness of the place, than as accessories that should properly be introduced into the picture. Even the birds are, in common, mute, or when they do break the silence, it is in a discordance that suits the character of their wild abode.

Through such a scene two men were industriously journeying on the day which succeeded the inroad last described. They marched as wont, one after the other, the younger and more active leading the way through the monotony of the woods, as accurately and as unhesitatingly as the mariner directs his course by the aid of the needle over the waste of waters. He in front was light, agile, and seemingly unwearied ; while the one who fol-

lowed was a man of heavy mould, whose step denoted less practice in the exercise of the forest, and possibly some failing of natural vigor.

"Thine eye, Narragansett, is an unerring compass by which to steer, and thy leg a never-wearied steed," said the latter, casting the butt of his musket on the end of a mouldering log, while he leaned on the barrel for support. "If thou movest on the war-path with the same diligence as thou usest in our errand of peace, well may the colonists dread thy enmity."

The other turned, and without seeking aid from the gun which rested against his shoulder, he pointed at the several objects he named, and answered—

"My father is this aged sycamore ; it leans against the young oak. Conanchet is a straight pine. There is great cunning in gray hairs," added the chief, stepping lightly forward until a finger rested on the arm of Submission ; "can they tell the time when we shall lie under the moss like a dead hemlock ?"

"That exceedeth the wisdom of man. It is enough, sachem, if when we fall, we may say with truth, that the land we shadowed is no poorer for our growth. Thy bones will lie in the earth where thy fathers trod, but mine may whiten in the vault of some gloomy forest."

The quiet of the Indian's face was disturbed. The pupils of his dark eyes contracted, his nostrils dilated, and his full chest heaved, and then all reposed like the sluggish ocean after a vain effort to heave its waters into some swelling wave, during a general calm.

"Fire hath scorched the prints of my father's moccasins from the earth," he said, with a smile that was placid though bitter, "and my eyes cannot find them. I shall die under that shelter," pointing through an opening in the foliage to the blue void ; "the falling leaves will cover my bones."

"Then hath the Lord given us a new bond of friendship. There is a yew-tree and a quiet church-yard in the country afar, where generations of my race sleep in their graves. The place is white with stones, that bear the name of——"

Submission suddenly ceased to speak, and when his eye was raised to that of his companion, it was just in time to detect the manner in which the curious interest of the latter changed suddenly to cold reserve, and to note the high courtesy of the air with which the Indian turned the discourse.

"There is water beyond the little hill," he said. "Let my father drink and grow strong, that he may live to lie in the clearings."

The other bowed, and they proceeded to the spot in silence. It would seem by the length of time that was now lost in taking the required refreshment, that the travellers had journeyed long and far. The Narragansett ate more sparingly, however, than his companion; for his mind appeared to sustain a weight that was far more grievous than the fatigue which had been endured by the body. Still his composure was little disturbed outwardly—for during the silent repast he maintained the air of a dignified warrior, rather than that of a man whose air could be much affected by inward sorrow. When nature was appeased, they both arose, and continued their route through the pathless forest.

For an hour after quitting the spring, the progress of our two adventurers was swift, and uninterrupted by any passing observation or momentary pause. At the end of that time, however, the speed of Conanchet began to slacken, and his eye, instead of maintaining its steady and forward direction, was seen to wander with some of the appearance of indecision.

"Thou hast lost those secret signs by which we have so far threaded the woods," observed his companion; "one tree is like another, and I see no difference in this wilderness of nature; but if thou art at fault, we may truly despair of our object."

"Here is the nest of the eagle," returned Conanchet, pointing at the object he named perched on the upper and whitened branches of the dead pine; "and my father may see the council-tree in this oak—but there are no Wampagoags!"

"There are many eagles in this forest—nor is that oak one that may not have its fellow. Thine eye hath been deceived, sachem, and some false sign hath led us astray."

Conanchet looked at his companion attentively. After a moment, he quietly asked—

"Did my father ever mistake his path, in going from his wigwam to the place where he looked upon the house of his Great Spirit?"

"The matter of that often travelled path was different, Narragansett. My foot had worn the rock with many passings, and the distance was a span. But we have journeyed through leagues of forest, and our route hath lain across

brook and hill, through brake and morass, where human vision hath not been able to detect the smallest sign of the presence of man."

"My father is old," said the Indian, respectfully. "His eye is not as quick as when he took the scalp of the Great Chief, or he would know the print of a moccason. See,"—making his companion observe the mark of a human foot that was barely discernible by the manner in which the dead leaves had been displaced—"his rock is worn, but it is harder than the ground. He cannot tell by its signs who passed, or when."

"Here is truly that which ingenuity may portray as the print of man's foot ; but it is alone, and may be some accident of the wind."

"Let my father look on every side ; he will see that a tribe hath passed."

"This may be true, though my vision is unequal to detect that thou wouldst show. But if a tribe hath passed, let us follow."

Conanchet shook his head, and spread the fingers of his two hands in a manner to describe the radii of a circle.

"Hugh !" he said, starting even while he was thus significantly answering by gestures, "a moccason comes !"

Submission, who had so often and so recently been arrayed against the savages, involuntarily sought the lock of his carbine. His look and action were menacing, though his roving eye could see no object to excite alarm.

Not so Conanchet. His quicker and more practised vision soon caught a glimpse of the warrior who was approaching, occasionally concealed by the trunks of trees, and whose tread on the dried leaves had first betrayed his proximity. Folding his arms on his naked bosom, the Narragansett chief awaited the coming of the other, in an attitude of calmness and dignity. Neither did he speak nor suffer a muscle to play, until a hand was placed on one of his arms, and he who had drawn near, said, in tones of amity and respect—

"The young sachem hath come to look for his brother ?"

"Wampanoag, I have followed the trail, that your ears may listen to the talk of a pale-face."

The third person in this interview was Metacom. He shot a haughty and fierce glance at the stranger, and then turned to his companion in arms, with recovered calmness, to reply.

"Has Conanchet counted his young men since they

raised the whoop?" he asked, in the language of the aborigines. "I saw many go into the fields, that never came back. Let the white men die."

"Wampanoag, he is led by the wampum of a sachem. I have not counted my young men; but I know that they are strong enough to say that what their chief hath promised shall be done."

"If the Yengeese is a friend to my brother, he is welcome. The wigwam of Metacom is open; let him enter it."

Philip made a sign for the others to follow, and led the way to the place he had named.

The spot chosen by Philip for his temporary encampment was suited to such a purpose. There was a thicket denser than common on one of its sides—a steep and high rock protected and sheltered its rear; a swift and wide brook dashed over fragments that had fallen, with time, from the precipice in its front, and toward the setting sun a whirlwind had opened a long and melancholy glade through the forest. A few huts of brush leaned against the base of the hill, and the scanty implements of their domestic economy were scattered among the habitations of the savages. The whole party did not number twenty; for, as has been said, the Wampanoag had acted latterly more by the agency of his allies, than with the materials of his own proper force.

The three were soon seated on a rock whose foot was washed by the rapid current of the tumbling water. A few gloomy looking and fierce Indians watched the conference in the background.

"My brother hath followed my trail, that my ears may hear the words of a Yengeese," Philip commenced, after a sufficient period had elapsed to escape the imputation of curiosity. "Let him speak."

"I have come singly into the jaws of the lion, restless and remorseless leader of the savages," returned the bold exile, "that you may hear the words of peace. Why hath the son seen the acts of the English so differently from the father? Massasoit was a friend of the persecuted and patient pilgrims who have sought rest and refuge in this Bethel of the faithful; but thou hast hardened thy heart to their prayers, and seekest the blood of those who wish thee no wrong. Doubtless thy nature is one of pride and mistaken vanities, like that of all thy race, and it hath seemed needful to the vain-glory of thy name and nation to battle

against men of a different origin. But know there is one who is master of all here on earth, as he is king of Heaven ! It is his pleasure that the sweet savor of his worship should arise from the wilderness. His will is law, and they that would withstand do but kick against the pricks. Listen then to peaceful counsels, that the land may be parcelled justly to meet the wants of all, and the country be prepared for the incense of the altar."

This exhortation was uttered in a deep and almost unearthly voice, and with a degree of excitement that was probably increased by the intensity with which the solitary had lately been brooding over his peculiar opinions, and the terrible scenes in which he had so recently been an actor. Philip listened with the high courtesy of an Indian prince. Unintelligible as was the meaning of the speaker, his countenance betrayed no gleaming of impatience, his lip no smile of ridicule. On the contrary, a noble and lofty gravity reigned in every feature ; and ignorant as he was of what the other wished to say, his attentive eye and bending head expressed every wish to comprehend.

"My pale friend hath spoken very wisely," he said, when the other ceased to speak. "But he doth not see clearly in these woods ; he sits too much in the shade ; his eye is better in a clearing. Metacom is not a fierce beast. His claws are worn out ; his legs are tired with travelling ; he cannot jump far. My pale friend wants to divide the land. Why trouble the Great Spirit to do his work twice ? He gave the Wampanoags their hunting grounds, and places on the salt lake to catch their fish and clams, and he did not forget his children, the Narragansetts. He put them in the midst of the water, for that he saw they could swim. Did he forget the Yengeese ? or did he put them in a swamp, where they would turn into frogs and lizards ?"

"Heathen, my voice shall never deny the bounties of my God ! His hand hath placed my fathers in a fertile land, rich in the good things of the world, fortunate in position, sea-girt and impregnable. Happy is he who can find justification in dwelling within its borders !"

An empty gourd lay on the rock, at the side of Metacom. Bending over the stream he filled it to the brim with water, and held the vessel before the eyes of his companions.

"See," he said, pointing to the even surface of the fluid :

"so much hath the Great Spirit said it shall hold. Now," he added, filling the hollow of the other hand from the brook, and casting its contents into the gourd, "now my brother knows that some must come away. It is so with his country. There is no longer room in it for my pale friend."

"Did I attempt to deceive thine ears with this tale, I should lay falsehood to my soul. We are many, and sorry am I to say that some among us are like unto them that were called 'Legion.' But to say that there is not still place for all to die where they are born, is to utter damning untruth."

"The land of the Yengeese is then good—very good," returned Philip; "but their young men like one that is better."

"Thy nature, Wampanoag, is not equal to comprehend the motives which have led us hither, and our discourse is getting vain."

"My brother Conanchet is a sachem. The leaves that fall from the trees of his country, in the season of frosts, blow into my hunting grounds. We are neighbors and friends," slightly bending his head to the Narragansett. "When a wicked Indian runs from the islands to the wigwams of my people, he is whipped and sent back. We keep the path between us open only for honest red men."

Philip spoke with a sneer that his habitual loftiness of manner did not conceal from his associate chief, though it was so slight as entirely to escape the observation of him who was the subject of his sarcasm. The former took the alarm, and for the first time during the dialogue did he break silence.

"My pale father is a brave warrior," said the young sachem of the Narragansetts. "His hand took the scalp of the Great Sagamore of his people!"

The countenance of Metacom changed instantly. In place of the ironical scorn that was gathering about his lip, its expression became serious and respectful. He gazed steadily at the hard and weather-beaten features of his guest; and it is probable that words of higher courtesy than any he had yet used would have fallen from him, had not at that moment a signal been given by a young Indian, set to watch on the summit of the rock, that one approached. Both Metacom and Conanchet appeared to hear this cry with some uneasiness. Neither, however, arose, nor did either betray such evidence of alarm as denoted a deeper

interest in the interruption than the circumstances might very naturally create. A warrior was shortly seen entering the encampment, from the side of the forest which was known to lie in the direction of the Wish-Ton-Wish.

The moment Conanchet saw the person of the newly-arrived man, his eye and attitude resumed their former repose, though the look of Metacom still continued gloomy and distrustful. The difference in the manner of the chiefs was not however sufficiently strong to be remarked by Submission, who was about to resume the discourse, when the new-comer moved past the cluster of warriors in the encampment, and took his seat near them, on a stone so low, that the water lavèd his feet. As usual, there was no greeting between the Indians for some moments, the three appearing to regard the arrival as a mere thing of course. But the uneasiness of Metacom prompted a communication sooner than common.

"Mohtucket," he said, in the language of their tribe, "hath lost the trail of his friends. We thought the crows of the pale men were picking his bones!"

"There was no scalp at his belt, and Mohtucket was ashamed to be seen among the young men with an empty hand."

"He remembered that he had too often come back without striking a dead enemy," returned Metacom, about whose firm mouth lurked an expression of ill-concealed contempt. "Has he now touched a warrior?"

The Indian, who was merely a man of the inferior class, held up the trophy which hung at his girdle, to the examination of the chief. Metacom looked at the disgusting object with the calmness and nearly with the interest that a virtuoso would lavish on an antique memorial of some triumph of former ages. His finger was thrust through a hole in the skin, and then, while he resumed his former position, he observed dryly—

"A bullet hath hit the head. The arrow of Mohtucket doth little harm!"

"Metacom hath never looked on his young man like a friend since the brother of Mohtucket was killed."

The glance that Philip cast at his underling, though it was not unmingled with suspicion, was one of princely and savage scorn. The white auditor had not been able to understand the discourse, but the dissatisfaction and uneasiness of the eyes of both were too obvious not to show that the conference was far from being amicable.

"The sachem hath discontent with his young man," he observed, "and from this may he understand the nature of that which leadeth many to quit the land of their fathers, beneath the rising sun, to come to this wilderness in the west. If he will now listen I will touch further on the business of my errand, and deal more at large with the subject we have but so lightly skimmed."

Philip manifested attention. He smiled on his guest, and even bowed his assent to the proposal; still his keen eye seemed to read the soul of his subordinate, through the veil of his gloomy visage. There was a play of the fingers of his right hand when the arm fell from its position across his bosom to his thigh, as if they itched to grasp the knife, whose buck-horn handle lay within a few inches of their reach. Yet his air to the white man was composed and dignified. The latter was again about to speak, when the arches of the forest suddenly rang with the report of a musket. All in and near the encampment sprang to their feet at the well-known sound, and yet all continued as motionless as if so many dark but breathing statues had been planted there. The rustling of leaves was heard, and then the body of the young Indian who had been posted on the rock, rolled to the edge of the precipice, whence it fell, like a log, on the yielding roof of one of the lodges beneath. A shout issued from the forest behind, a volley roared among the trees, and glancing lead was whistling through the air, and cutting twigs from the undergrowth on every side. Two more of the Wampanoags were seen rolling on the earth in the death agony.

The voice of Annawon was heard in the encampment, and at the next instant the place was deserted.

During this startling and fearful moment the four individuals near the stream were inactive. Conanchet and his Christian friend stood to their arms, but it was rather as men cling to the means of defence in moments of great jeopardy, than with any intention of offensive hostilities. Metacom seemed undecided. Accustomed to receive and inflict surprises, a warrior so experienced could not be disconcerted; still he hesitated as to the course he ought to take. But when Annawon, who was nearer the scene, sounded the signal of retreat, he sprang toward the returned straggler, and with a single blow of his tomahawk brained the traitor. Glances of fierce revenge, and of inextinguishable though disappointed hatred, were exchanged between the victim and his chief, as the former lay

on the rock, gasping for breath; and then the latter turned in his tracks, and raised the dripping weapon over the head of the white man.

"Wampanoag, no!" said Conanchet, in a voice of thunder. "Our lives are one."

Philip hesitated. Fierce and dangerous passions were struggling in his breast, but the habitual self-command of the wily politician of those woods prevailed. Even in that scene of blood and alarm he smiled on his powerful and fearless young ally; then pointing to the deepest shades of the forest he bounded toward them with the activity of a deer.

CHAPTER XXX.

"But peace be with him!
That life is better life, past fearing death,
Than that which lives to fear."—*Measure for Measure.*

COURAGE is both a comparative and an improvable virtue. If the fear of death be a weakness common to the race, it is one that is capable of being diminished by frequent exposure, and even rendered extinct by reflection. It was, therefore, with sensibilities entirely changed from their natural course, that the two individuals who were left alone by the retreat of Philip, saw the nature and the approach of the danger that now beset them. Their position near the brook had so far protected them from the bullets of the assailants; but it was equally obvious to both, that in a minute or two the colonists would enter an encampment that was already deserted. Each, in consequence, acted according to those opinions which had been fostered by the habits of their respective lives.

As Conanchet had no act of vengeance like that which Metacom had performed, immediately before his eyes, he had, at the first alarm, given all his faculties to the nature of the attack. The first minute was sufficient to understand its character, and the second enabled him to decide.

"Come," he said hastily, but with perfect self-possession, pointing as he spoke to the swift-running stream at his feet: "we will go with the water, let the marks of our trail run before."

Submission hesitated. There was something like haughty military pride in the stern determination of his eye,

which seemed reluctant to incur the disgrace of a flight so unequivocal, and, as he might have believed, so unworthy of his character.

"No, Narragansett," he answered; "flee for thy life, but leave me to reap the harvest of my deeds. They can but leave my bones by the side of those of this traitor at my feet."

The mien of Conanchet was neither excited nor displeased. He quietly drew the corner of his light robe over a shoulder, and was about to resume his seat on the stone from which he had but a minute before arisen, when his companion again urged him to fly.

"The enemies of a chief must not say that he led his friend into a trap, and that when his leg was fast he ran away himself, like a lucky fox. If my brother stays to be killed, Conanchet will be found near him."

"Heathen, heathen!" returned the other, moved nearly to tears by the loyalty of his guide; "many a Christian man might take lessons from thy faith. Lead on—I will follow at the utmost of my speed."

The Narragansett sprang into the brook, and took its downward course—a direction opposite to that which Philip had chosen. There was wisdom in this expedient; for though their pursuers might see that the water was troubled, there was no certainty as to the direction of the fugitives. Conanchet had foreseen this little advantage, and with the instinctive readiness of his people, he did not fail to make it of service. Metacom had been influenced by the course taken by his warriors, who had retired under shelter of the rocks.

Ere the two fugitives had gone any great distance, they heard the shouts of their enemies in the encampment; and soon after, scattering shot announced that Philip had already rallied his people to resistance. There was an assurance of safety in the latter circumstance, which caused them to relax their speed.

"My foot is not as active as in days that are past," said Submission; "we will therefore recover strength while we may, lest we be yet taken at emergency. Narragansett, thou hast ever kept thy faith with me, and come of what race or worship in what manner thou mayst, there is one to remember it."

"My father looked with the eye of a friend on the Indian boy that was kept like a young bear in a cage. He taught him to speak with the tongue of a Yengeese."

"We passed weary months together in our prison, chief; and Apollyon must have been strong in a heart, to resist the opportunity of friendship, in such a situation. But, even there, my confidence and care were repaid, for without thy mysterious hints, gathered from signs thou hadst gleaned thyself during the hunt, it would not have been in my power to warn my friends that thy people contemplated an attack, the unhappy night of the burning. Narragansett, we have done many acts of kindness, each in his own fashion, and I am ready to confess this last not to be the least of thy favors. Though of white blood and of Christian origin, I can almost say that my heart is Indian."

"Then die an Indian's death!" shouted a voice within twenty feet of the spot where they were wading down the stream.

The menacing words were rather accompanied than seconded by a shot, and Submission fell. Conanchet cast his musket into the water, and turned to raise his companion.

"It was merely age dealing with the slippery stones of the brook," said the latter, as he recovered his footing. "That had well-nigh been a fatal discharge! but God, for his own purpose, hath still averted the blow."

Conanchet did not speak. Seizing his gun, which lay at the bottom of the stream, he drew his friend after him to the shore, and plunged into the thicket that lined its banks. Here they were momentarily protected from missiles. But the shouts that succeeded the discharge of the muskets, were accompanied by yells that he knew to proceed from Pequods and Mohicans, tribes that were in deadly hostility to his own people. The hope of concealing their trail from such pursuers was not to be indulged, and for his companion to escape by flight he knew to be impossible. There was no time to lose. In such emergencies, with an Indian, thought takes the character of instinct. The fugitives stood at the foot of a sapling, whose top was completely concealed by masses of leaves, which belonged to the under-brush that clustered around its trunk. Into this tree he assisted Submission to ascend, and then, without explaining his own views, he instantly left the spot, rendering his own trail as broad and perceptible as possible, by beating down the bushes as he passed.

The expedient of the faithful Narragansett was completely successful. Before he had got a hundred yards from the place, he saw the foremost of the hostile Indians

hunting like bloodhounds on his footsteps. His movement was slow, until he saw that, having his person in view, all of the pursuers had passed the tree. Then, the arrow parting from the bow was scarce swifter than his flight.

The pursuit now partook of all the exciting incidents and ingenious expedients of an Indian chase. Conanchet was soon hunted from his cover, and obliged to trust his person in the more open parts of the forest. Miles of hill and ravine, of plain, of rocks, of morass and stream were crossed, and still the trained warrior held on his way unbroken in spirit and scarce wearied in limb. The merit of a savage in such an employment rests more on his bottom than on his speed. The three or four colonists, who had been sent with the party of amicable Indians to intercept those who might attempt to escape down the stream, were early thrown out; and the struggle was now entirely between the fugitive and men equally practised in limb and ingenious in expedient.

The Pequods had a great advantage in their number. The frequent doublings of the fugitive kept the chase within the circle of a mile, and as each of his enemies tired, there were always fresh pursuers to take his place. In such a contest the result could not be questionable. After more than two hours of powerful exertion, the foot of Conanchet began to fail, and his speed very sensibly to flag. Exhausted by efforts that had been nearly supernatural, the breathless warrior cast his person prostrate on the earth, and lay for several minutes as if he were dead.

During this breathing-time his throbbing pulses grew more calm, his heart beat less violently, and the circulation was gradually returning to the tranquil flow of nature in a state of rest. It was at this moment, when his energies were recruited by rest, that the chief heard the tread of the moccasins on his trail. Rising, he looked back on the course over which he had just passed with so much pain. But a single warrior was in view. Hope for an instant regained the ascendancy; and he raised his musket to fell his approaching adversary. The aim was cool, long, and it would have been fatal had not the useless tick of the lock reminded him of the condition of the gun. He cast the wet and unserviceable piece away and grasped his tomahawk; but a band of Pequods rushed in to the rescue, rendering resistance madness. Perceiving the hopelessness of his situation, the sachem of the Narragansetts

dropped his tomahawk, loosened his belt, and advanced unarmed, with a noble resignation, to meet his foes. In the next instant he was their prisoner.

"Bring me to your chief," said the captive, haughtily, when the common herd into whose hands he had fallen would have questioned him on the subject of his companion's and of his own fate. "My tongue is used to speak with sachems."

He was obeyed, and before an hour had passed the renowned Conanchet stood confronted with his most deadly enemy.

The place of meeting was the deserted encampment of the band of Philip. Here most of the pursuers had already assembled, including all of the colonists who had been engaged in the expedition. The latter consisted of Meek Wolfe, Ensign Dudley, Sergeant Ring, and a dozen private men of the village.

The result of the enterprise was, by this time, generally known. Though Metacom, its principal object, had escaped; yet, when it was understood that the sachem of the Narragansetts had fallen into their hands, there was not an individual of the party who did not think his personal risk more than amply compensated. Though the Mohicans and Pequods restrained their exultation, lest the pride of their captive should be soothed by such an evidence of his importance, the white men drew around the prisoner with an interest and a joy they did not care to conceal. Still, as he had yielded to an Indian, there was an affectation of leaving the chief to the clemency of his conquerors. Perhaps some deeply pondered scheme of policy had its influence in this act of seeming justice.

When Conanchet was placed in the centre of the curious circle, he found himself immediately in presence of the principal chief of the tribe of the Mohicans. It was Uncas, son of that Uncas whose fortunes had also prevailed, aided by the whites, in the conflict with his father, the hapless but noble Miantonimoh. Fate had now decreed that the same evil star, which had governed the destinies of the ancestor, should extend its influence to the second generation.

The race of Uncas, though weakened of its power, and shorn of much of its peculiar grandeur by a vicious alliance with the English, still retained most of the fine qualities of savage heroism. He, who now stood forth to receive his captive, was a warrior of middle age, of just propor-

tions, of a grave, though fierce aspect, and of an eye and countenance that expressed all those contradictory traits of character which render the savage warrior almost as admirable as he is appalling. Until this moment the rival chieftains had never met except in the confusion of battle. For a few minutes neither spoke. Each stood regarding the fine outlines, the eagle eye, the proud bearing, and the severe gravity of the other in secret admiration, but with a calmness so immovable as entirely to conceal the workings of his thoughts. At length they began to assume mien suited to the part each was to enact in the coming scene. The countenance of Uncas became ironical and exulting, while that of his captive grew still more cold and unconcerned.

"My young men," said the former, "have taken a fox skulking in the bushes. His legs were very long; but he had no heart to use them."

Conanchet folded his arms on his bosom, and the glance of his quiet eye seemed to tell his enemy that devices so common were unworthy of them both. The other either understood its meaning, or loftier feelings prevailed, for he added, in a better taste—

"Is Conanchet tired of his life that he comes among my young men?"

"Mohican," said the Narragansett chief, "he has been there before; if Uncas will count his warriors he will see that some are wanting."

"There are no traditions among the Indians of the islands!" said the other, with an ironical glance at the chiefs near him. "They have never heard of Miäntonimoh; they do not know such a field as the Sachem's Plain!"

The countenance of the prisoner changed. For a single instant it appeared to grow dark, as if a deep shadow were cast athwart it; and then every feature rested, as before, in dignified repose. His conqueror watched the play of his lineaments, and when he thought nature was getting the ascendancy, exultation gleamed about his own fierce eye; but when the self-possession of the Narragansett returned, he affected to think no more of an effort that had been fruitless.

"If the men of the islands know little," he continued, "it is not so with the Mohicans. There was once a great sachem among the Narragansetts; he was wiser than the beaver, swifter than the moose, and more cunning than the red fox. But he could not see into to-morrow. Foolish

counsellors told him to go upon the war-path against the Pequods and Mohicans. He lost his scalp ; it hangs in the smoke of my wigwam. We shall see if it will know the hair of its son. Narragansett, here are wise men of the pale-faces ; they will speak to you. If they offer a pipe, smoke ; for tobacco is not plenty with your tribe."

Uncas then turned away, leaving his prisoner to the interrogatories of his white allies.

"Here is the look of Miantonimoh, Sergeant Ring," observed Ensign Dudley to his wife's brother, after he had contemplated for a reasonable time the features of the prisoner. "I see the eye and the tread of the father in this young sachem. And more, Sergeant Ring ; the chief favors the boy we picked up in the fields some dozen years ago, and kept in the block for the matter of many months, caged like a young panther. Hast forgotten the night, Reuben, and the lad, and the block ? A fiery oven is not hotter than that pile was getting before we dove into the earth. I never fail to think of it when the good minister is dealing powerfully with the punishments of the wicked, and the furnaces of Tophet !"

The silent yeoman comprehended the disconnected allusions of his relative, nor was he slow in seeing the palpable resemblance between their prisoner and the Indian boy whose person had once been so familiar to his eye. Admiration and surprise were blended in his honest face, with an expression that appeared to announce deep regret. As neither of these individuals, however, was the principal personage of their party, each was fain to remain an attentive and interested observer of that which followed.

"Worshipper of Baal !" commenced the sepulchral voice of the divine, "it has pleased the King of Heaven and earth to protect his people ! The triumph of thy evil nature hath been short, and now cometh the judgment !"

These words were uttered to ears that affected deafness. In the presence of his most deadly foe, and a captive, Conanchet was not a man to suffer his resolution to waver. He looked coldly and vacantly on the speaker, nor could the most suspicious or the most practised eye have detected in his mien his knowledge of the English language. Deceived by the stoicism of the prisoner, Meek muttered a few words, in which the Narragansett was strangely dealt by, denunciations and petitions in his favor being blended in the quaint and exaggerated fashions of the times ; and then he submitted to the interference of those present, who

were charged with the duty of deciding on the fate of the Indian.

Although Eben Dudley was the principal and the efficient military man in this little expedition from the valley, he was accompanied by those whose authority was predominant in all matters that did not strictly appertain to the executive portion of the duty. Commissioners, named by the Government of the Colony, had come out with the party, clothed with power to dispose of Philip, should that dreaded chief, as was expected, fall into the hands of the English. To these persons the fate of Conanchet was now referred.

We shall not detain the narrative to dwell on the particulars of the council. The question was gravely considered, and it was decided with a deep and conscientious sense of the responsibility of those who acted as judges. Several hours were passed in deliberation, Meek opening and closing the proceedings by solemn prayers. The judgment was then announced to Uncas by the divine himself.

"The wise men of my people have consulted together in the matter of this Narragansett," he said, "and their spirits have wrestled powerfully with the subject. In coming to their conclusion, if it wear the aspect of time-serving, let all remember the Providence of Heaven hath so interwoven the interests of man with its own good purposes, that to the carnal eye they may outwardly seem to be inseparable. But that which is here done is done in good faith to our ruling principle, which is good faith to thee and to all others who support the altar in this wilderness. And herein is our decision: We commit the Narragansett to thy justice, since it is evident that while he is at large, neither thou, who art a feeble prop to the Church in these regions, nor we, who are its humble and unworthy servants, are safe. Take him, then, and deal with him according to thy wisdom. We place limits to thy power in only two things. It is not meet that any born of humanity, and having human sensibilities, should suffer more in the flesh than may be necessary to the ends of duty; we therefore decree that thy captive shall not die by torture; and, for the better security of this our charitable decision, two of our number shall accompany thee and him to the place of execution; it being always supposed it is thy intention to inflict the pains of death. Another condition of this concession to a foreordained necessity is, that a Christian minister may be at hand, in order that the sufferer may

depart with the prayers of one accustomed to lift his voice in petitions to the footstool of the Almighty."

The Mohegan chief heard this sentence with deep attention. When he found he was to be denied the satisfaction of proving, or perhaps of overcoming, the resolution of his enemy, a deep cloud passed across his swarthy visage. But the strength of his tribe had long been broken, and to resist would have been as unprofitable as to repine would have been unseemly. The conditions were therefore accepted, and preparations were accordingly made among the Indians to proceed to judgment.

These people had few contradictory principles to appease, and no subtleties to distract their decision. Direct, fearless, and simple in all their practices, they did little more than gather the voices of the chiefs and acquaint their captive with the result. They knew that fortune had thrown an implacable enemy into their hands, and they believed that self-preservation demanded his life. To them it mattered little whether he had arrows in his hands, or had yielded himself an unarmed prisoner. He knew the risk he ran in submitting, and he had probably consulted his own character, rather than their benefit, in throwing away his arms. They therefore pronounced the judgment of death against their captive, merely respecting the decree of their white allies, which had commanded them to spare the torture.

So soon as this determination was known, the Commissioners of the Colony hastened away from the spot with consciences that required some aid from the stimulus of their subtle doctrines, in order to render them quiet. They were, however, ingenious casuists; and as they hurried along their return path, most of the party were satisfied that they had rather manifested a merciful interposition, than exercised any act of positive cruelty.

During the two or three hours which had passed in these solemn and usual preparations, Conanchet was seated on a rock, a close but apparently an unmoved spectator of all that passed. His eye was mild, and at times melancholy; but its brightness and its steadiness remained unimpaired. When his sentence was announced, it exhibited no change; and he saw all the pale men depart, with the calmness he had maintained throughout. It was only as Uncas, attended by the body of his party and the two white superintendents who had been left, approached, that his spirit seemed to awaken.

"My people have said that there shall be no more wolves in the woods," said Uncas; "and they have commanded our young men to slay the hungriest of them all."

"It is well!" coldly returned the other.

A gleaming of admiration, and perhaps of humanity, came over the grim countenance of Uncas, as he gazed at the repose which reigned in the firm features of his victim. For an instant, his purpose wavered.

"The Mohicans are a great tribe!" he added; "and the race of Uncas is getting few. We will paint our brother so that the lying Narragansetts shall not know him, and he will be a warrior on the mainland."

This relenting of his enemy had a corresponding effect on the generous temper of Conanchet. The lofty pride deserted his eye, and his look became milder and more human. For a minute, intense thought brooded around his brow; the grim muscles of his mouth played a little, though scarcely enough to be seen, and then he spoke.

"Mohican," he said, "why should your young men be in a hurry? My scalp will be the scalp of a great chief to-morrow. They will not take two, should they strike their prisoner now."

"Hath Conanchet forgotten anything, that he is not ready?"

"Sachem, he is always ready—but——" he paused, and spoke in tones that faltered,—“does a Mohican live alone?"

"How many suns does the Narragansett ask?"

"One; when the shadow of that pine points toward the brook, Conanchet will be ready. He will then stand in the shade, with naked hands."

"Go," said Uncas, with dignity; "I have heard the words of a sagamore."

Conanchet turned, and passing swiftly through the silent crowd, his person was soon lost in the surrounding forest.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Therefore, lay bare your bosom."

—*Merchant of Venice.*

THE night that succeeded was wild and melancholy. The moon was nearly full, but its place in the heavens was only seen, as the masses of vapor which drove through the air

occasionally opened, suffering short gleams of fitful light to fall on the scene below. A southwestern wind rather moaned than sighed through the forest, and there were moments when its freshness increased, till every leaf seemed a tongue, and each low plant appeared to be endowed with the gift of speech. With the exception of these imposing and not unpleasing natural sounds, there was a solemn quiet in and about the village of the Wish-Ton-Wish. An hour before the moment when we resume the action of the legend, the sun had settled into the neighboring forest, and most of its simple and laborious inhabitants had already sought their rest.

The lights, however, still shone through many of the windows of the "Heathcote house," as, in the language of the country, the dwelling of the Puritan was termed. There was the usual stirring industry in and about the offices, and the ordinary calm was reigning in the superior parts of the habitation. A solitary man was to be seen on its piazza. It was young Mark Heathcote, who paced the long and narrow gallery, as if impatient of some interruption to his wishes.

The uneasiness of the young man was of short continuance; for, ere he had been many minutes at his post a door opened, and two light and timid forms glided out of the house.

"Thou hast not come alone, Martha," said the youth, half-displeased. "I told thee that the matter I had to say was for thine own ear."

"It is our Ruth. Thou knowest, Mark, that she may not be left alone, for we fear her return to the forest. She is like some ill-tamed fawn, that would be apt to leap away at the first well-known sound from the woods. Even now, I fear that we are too much asunder."

"Fear nothing; my sister fondles her infant, and she thinketh not of flight; thou seest I am here to intercept her, were such her intention. Now speak with candor, Martha, and say if thou meanest in sincerity that the visits of the Hartford gallant were less to thy liking than most of thy friends have believed?"

"What I have said cannot be recalled."

"Still it may be repented of."

"I do not number the dislike I may feel for the young man among my failings. I am too happy here, in this family, to wish to quit it. And now that our sister—there is one speaking to her at this moment, Mark!"

"'Tis only the innocent," returned the young man, glancing his eye to the other end of the piazza. "They confer often together. Whittal hath just come in from the woods, where he is much inclined to pass an hour or two, each evening. Thou wast saying that now we have our sister —"

"I feel less desire to change my abode."

"Then why not stay with us forever, Martha?"

"Hist!" interrupted his companion, who, though conscious of what she was about to listen to, shrank, with the waywardness of human nature, from the very declaration she most wished to hear, "hist—there was a movement. Ah! Ruth and Whittal are fled!"

"They seek some amusement for the babe—they are near the out-buildings. Then why not accept a right to remain forever——"

"It may not be, Mark," cried the girl, wresting her hand from his grasp; "they are fled!"

Mark reluctantly released his hold, and followed to the spot where his sister had been sitting. She was, in truth, gone; though some minutes passed before even Martha seriously believed that she had disappeared without an intention of returning. The agitation of both rendered the search ill-directed and uncertain, and there was perhaps a secret satisfaction in prolonging their interview even in this vague manner, that prevented them for some time from giving the alarm. When that moment did come, it was too late. The fields were examined, the orchards and out-houses thoroughly searched, without any traces of the fugitives. It would have been useless to enter the forest in the darkness, and all that could be done in reason, was to set a watch during the night, and to prepare for a more active and intelligent pursuit in the morning.

But, long before the sun arose, the small and melancholy party of the fugitives threaded the woods at such a distance from the valley, as would have rendered the plan of the family entirely nugatory. Conanchet had led the way over a thousand forest knolls, across water-courses, and through dark glens, followed by his silent partner, with an industry that would have baffled the zeal of even those from whom they fled. Whittal Ring, bearing the infant on his back, trudged with unwearied step in the rear. Hours had passed in this manner, and not a syllable had been uttered by either of the three. Once or twice, they had stopped at some spot where water, limpid as the air, gushed

from the rocks ; and, drinking from the hollows of their hands, the march had been resumed with the same speechless industry as before.

At length Conanchet paused. He studied the position of the sun gravely, and took a long and anxious look at the signs of the forest, in order that he might not be deceived in its quarter. To an unpractised eye, the arches of the trees, the leaf-covered earth, and the mouldering logs, would have seemed everywhere the same. But it was not easy to deceive one so trained in the woods. Satisfied equally with the progress he had made, and with the hour, the chief signed to his two companions to place themselves at his side, and took a seat on a low shelf of rock that thrust its naked head out of the side of a hill.

For many minutes after all were seated, no one broke the silence. The eye of Narra-mattah sought the countenance of her husband, as the eye of woman seeks instruction from the expression of features that she has been taught to revere ; but still she spoke not. The innocent laid the patient babe at the feet of its mother, and imitated her reserve.

"Is the air of the woods pleasant to the Honeysuckle, after living in the wigwam of her people ?" asked Conanchet, breaking the long silence. "Can a flower, which blossomed in the sun, like the shade ?"

"A woman of the Narragansetts is happiest in the lodge of her husband."

The eye of the chief met her confiding look with affection, and then it fell, mild and full of kindness, on the features of the infant that lay at their feet. There was a minute, during which an expression of bitter melancholy gathered about his brow.

"The Spirit that made the earth," he continued, "is very cunning. He has known where to put the hemlock, and where the oak should grow. He has left the moose and the deer to the Indian hunter, and he has given the horse and the ox to a pale-face. Each tribe hath its hunting grounds and its game. The Narragansetts know the taste of a clam, while the Mohawks eat the berries of the mountains. Thou hast seen the bright bow which shines in the skies, Narra-mattah, and knowest how one color is mixed with another, like paint on a warrior's face. The leaf of the hemlock is like the leaf of the sumach ; the ash, the chestnut ; the chestnut, the linden ; and the linden, the broad-leaved tree which bears the red fruit, in the

clearing of the Yengeese ; but the tree of the red fruit is little like the hemlock ! Conanchet is a tall and straight hemlock, and the father of Narra-mattah is a tree of the clearing, that bears the red fruit. The Great Spirit was angry when they grew together."

The sensitive wife understood but too well the current of the chief's thoughts. Suppressing the pain she felt, however, she answered with the readiness of a woman whose imagination was quickened by her affections.

"What Conanchet hath said is true. But the Yengeese have put the apple of their own land on the thorn of our woods, and the fruit is good!"

"It is like that boy," said the chief, pointing to his son ; "neither red nor pale. No, Narra-mattah ; what the Great Spirit hath commanded, even a sachem must do."

"And doth Conanchet say this fruit is not good ?" asked his wife, lifting the smiling boy with a mother's joy before his eyes.

The heart of the warrior was touched. Bending his head, he kissed the babe, with such fondness as parents less stern are wont to exhibit. For a moment, he appeared to have satisfaction in gazing at the promise of the child. But, as he raised his head, his eye caught a glimpse of the sun, and the whole expression of his countenance changed. Motioning to his wife to replace the infant on the earth, he turned to her with solemnity, and continued—

"Let the tongue of Narra-mattah speak without fear. She hath been in the lodges of her father, and hath tasted of their plenty. Is her heart glad ?"

The young wife paused. The question brought with it a sudden recollection of all those reviving sensations, of that tender solicitude, and of those soothing sympathies of which she had so lately been the subject. But these feelings soon vanished ; for, without daring to lift her eyes to meet the attentive and anxious gaze of the chief, she said firmly, though with a voice that was subdued by diffidence—

"Narra-mattah is a wife."

"Then will she listen to the words of her husband. Conanchet is a chief no longer. He is a prisoner of the Mohicans. Uncas waits for him in the woods !"

Notwithstanding the recent declaration of the young wife, she heard of this calamity with little of the calmness of an Indian woman. At first it seemed as if her senses

refused to comprehend the meaning of the words. Wonder, doubt, horror, and fearful certainty, each in its turn prevailed; for she was too well schooled in all the usages and opinions of the people with whom she dwelt, not to understand the jeopardy in which her husband was placed.

"The Sachem of the Narragansetts a prisoner of Mohican Uncas!" she repeated in a low tone, as if the sound of her voice were necessary to dispel some horrible illusion. "No! Uncas is not a warrior to strike Conanchet!"

"Hear my words," said the chief, touching the shoulder of his wife, as one arouses a friend from his slumbers. "There is a pale-face in these woods who is a burrowing fox. He hides his head from the Yengeese. When his people were on the trail, barking like hungry wolves, this man trusted to a sagamore. It was a swift chase, and my father is getting very old. He went up a young hickory like a bear, and Conanchet led off the lying tribe. But he is not a moose. His legs cannot go like running water forever!"

"And why did the great Narragansett give his life for a stranger?"

"The man is a brave," returned the sachem, proudly; "he took the scalp of a sagamore!"

Again Narra-mattah was silent. She brooded in nearly stupid amazement on the frightful truth.

"The Great Spirit sees that the man and his wife are of different tribes," she at length ventured to rejoin. "He wishes them to become the same people. Let Conanchet quit the woods, and go into the clearings, with the mother of his boy. Her white father will be glad, and Mohican Uncas will not dare to follow."

"Woman, I am a sachem, and a warrior among my people!"

There was a severe and cold displeasure in the voice of Conanchet that his companion had never before heard. He spoke in the manner of a chief to his woman, rather than with that manly softness with which he had been accustomed to address the scion of the pale-faces. The words came over her heart like a withering chill, and affliction kept her mute. The chief himself sat a moment longer in a stern calmness, and then rising in displeasure he pointed to the sun, and beckoned to his companions to proceed. In a time that appeared to the throbbing heart of her who followed his swift footsteps but a moment, they had turned a little eminence, and in another minute they stood in the

presence of a party that evidently awaited their coming. This grave group consisted only of Uncas, two of his fiercest-looking and most athletic warriors, the divine, and Eben Dudley.

Advancing rapidly to the spot where his enemy stood, Conanchet took his post at the foot of the fatal tree. Pointing to the shadow, which had not yet turned toward the east, he folded his arms on his naked bosom, and assumed an air of haughty unconcern. These movements were made in the midst of a profound stillness.

Disappointment, unwilling admiration, and distrust, all struggled through the mask of practised composure, in the dark countenance of Uncas. He regarded his long-hated and terrible foe with an eye that seemed willing to detect some lurking signs of weakness. It would not have been easy to say whether he most felt respect or regret at the faith of the Narragansett. Accompanied by his two grim warriors, the chief examined the position of the shadow with critical minuteness, and when there no longer existed a pretext for affecting to doubt the punctuality of their captive, a deep ejaculation of assent issued from the chest of each. Like some wary judge, whose justice is fettered by legal precedents, as if satisfied there was no flaw in the proceedings, the Mohican then signed to the white men to draw near.

"Man of a wild and unreclaimed nature!" commenced Meek Wolfe, in his usual admonitory and ascetic tones, "the hour of thy existence draws to its end! Judgment hath had rule; thou hast been weighed in the balances and art found wanting. But Christian charity is never weary. We may not resist the ordinances of Providence, but we may temper the blow to the offender. That thou art here to die is a mandate decreed in equity, and rendered awful by mystery; but further, submission to the will of Heaven doth not exact. Heathen, thou hast a soul; and it is about to leave its earthly tenement for the unknown world——"

Until now, the captive had listened with the courtesy of a savage when unexcited. He had even gazed at the quiet enthusiasm and singularly contradictory passions that shone in the deep lines of the speaker's face, with some such reverence as he might have manifested at an exhibition of one of the pretended revelations of a prophet of his tribe. But when the divine came to touch upon his condition after death, his mind received a clear, and

to him an unerring clew to the truth. Laying a finger suddenly on the shoulder of Meek, he interrupted him by saying—

“My father forgets that the skin of his son is red. The path to the happy hunting grounds of just Indians lies before him.”

“Heathen, in thy words hath the Master Spirit of Delusion and Sin uttered his blasphemies!”

“Hist! Did my father see that which stirred the bush?”

“It was the viewless wind, idolatrous and idle-minded infant in the form of adult man!”

“And yet my father speaks to it,” returned the Indian, with the grave but cutting sarcasm of his people. “See,” he added, haughtily, and even with ferocity, “the shadow hath passed the root of the tree. Let the cunning man of the pale-faces stand aside; a sachem is ready to die!”

Meek groaned audibly and in real sorrow; for, notwithstanding the veil which exalted theories and doctrinal subtleties had drawn before his judgment, the charities of the man were grounded in truth. Bowing to what he believed to be a mysterious dispensation of the will of Heaven, he withdrew to a short distance, and kneeling on a rock, his voice was heard during the remainder of the ceremonies, lifting its tones in fervent prayer for the soul of the condemned.

The divine had no sooner quitted the place, than Uncas motioned to Dudley to approach. Though the nature of the borderer was essentially honest and kind, he was in opinion and prejudices but a creature of the times. If he had assented to the judgment which committed the captive to the mercy of his implacable enemies, he had the merit of having suggested the expedient that was to protect the sufferer from those refinements in cruelty which the savages were known to be too ready to inflict. He had even volunteered to be one of the agents to enforce his own expedient, though in so doing he had committed no little violence to his natural inclinations. The reader will therefore judge of his conduct in this particular, with the degree of lenity that a right consideration of the condition of the country and of the usages of the age may require. There was even a relenting and a yielding of purpose in the countenance of this witness of the scene, that was favorable to the safety of the captive, as he now spoke. His address was first to Uncas.

“A happy fortune, Mohican, something aided by the

power of the white men, hath put this Narragansett into thy hands," he said. "It is certain that the Commissioners of the Colony have consented that thou shouldst exercise thy will on his life; but there is a voice in the breast of every human being, which should be stronger than the voice of revenge, and that is the voice of mercy. It is not yet too late to hearken to it. Take the promise of the Narragansett for his faith—take more: take a hostage in this child, which with its mother shall be guarded among the English, and let the prisoner go."

"My brother asketh with a big mind!" said Uncas, dryly.

"I know not how nor why it is I ask with this earnestness," resumed Dudley, "but there are old recollections and former kindnesses, in the face and manner of this Indian! And here, too, is one, in the woman that I know is tied to some of our settlements, with a bond nearer than that of common charity. Mohican, I will add a goodly gift of powder and of muskets, if thou wilt listen to mercy, and take the faith of the Narragansett."

Uncas pointed with ironical coldness to his captive, as he said—

"Let Conanchet speak!"

"Thou hearest, Narragansett. If the man I begin to suspect thee to be, thou knowest something of the usages of the whites. Speak! Wilt swear to keep peace with the Mohicans, and to bury the hatchet in the path between your villages?"

"The fire that burnt the lodges of my people turned the heart of Conanchet to stone," was the steady answer.

"Then can I do no more than see the treaty respected," returned Dudley, in disappointment. "Thou hast thy nature, and it will have way. The Lord have mercy on thee, Indian, and render thee such judgment as is meet for one of savage opportunities."

He made a gesture to Uncas that he had done, and fell back a few paces from the tree, his honest features expressing all his concern, while his eye did not refuse to do its duty by closely watching each movement of the adverse parties. At the same instant the grim attendants of the Mohican chief, in obedience to a sign, took their stations on each side of the captive. They evidently waited for the last and fatal signal, to complete their unrelenting purpose. At this grave moment there was a pause, as if each of the principal actors pondered serious matter in his inmost mind.

"The Narragansett hath not spoken to his woman," said Uncas, secretly hoping that his enemy might yet betray some unmanly weakness in a moment of so severe trial. "She is near."

"I said my heart was stone," coldly returned the Narragansett.

"See! the girl creepeth like a frightened fowl among the leaves. If my brother Conanchet will look, he will see his beloved."

The countenance of Conanchet grew dark, but it did not waver.

"We will go among the bushes, if the sachem is afraid to speak to his woman with the eyes of a Mohican on him. A warrior is not a curious girl, that he wishes to see the sorrow of a chief!"

Conanchet felt hurriedly for some weapon that might strike his enemy to the earth, and then a low murmuring sound at his elbow stole so softly on his ear, as suddenly to divert the tempest of passion.

"Will not a sachem look at his boy?" demanded the suppliant. "It is the son of a great warrior. Why is the face of his father so dark on him?"

Narra-mattah had drawn near enough to her husband to be within reach of his hand. With extended arms she held the pledge of their former happiness toward the chief, as if to beseech a last and kindly look of recognition and love.

"Will not the great Narragansett look at his boy?" she repeated, in a voice that sounded like the lowest notes of some touching melody. "Why is his face so dark on a woman of his tribe?"

Even the stern features of the Mohican sagamore showed that he was touched. Beckoning to his grim attendants to move behind the tree, he turned and walked aside with the noble air of a savage, when influenced by his better feelings. Then light shot into the clouded countenance of Conanchet. His eyes sought the face of his stricken and grieved consort, who mourned less for his danger than she grieved for his displeasure. He received the boy from her hands, and studied his features long and intently. Beckoning to Dudley, who alone gazed on the scene, he placed the infant in his arms.

"See!" he said, pointing to the child. "It is a blossom of the clearings. It will not live in the shade."

He then fastened a look on his trembling partner. There

was a husband's love in the gaze. "Flower of the open land!" he said; "the Manitou of thy race will place thee in the fields of thy fathers. The sun will shine upon thee, and the winds from beyond the salt lake will blow the clouds into the woods. A just and great chief cannot shut his ear to the Good Spirit of his people. Mine calls his son to hunt among the braves that have gone on the long path. Thine points another way. Go, hear His voice and obey. Let thy mind be like a wide clearing. Let all its shadows be next the woods; let it forget the dream it dreamt among the trees. 'Tis the will of the Manitou."

"Conanchet asketh much of his wife. Her soul is only the soul of a woman!"

"A woman of the pale-faces; now let her seek her tribe. Narra-mattah, thy people speak strange traditions. They say that one just man died for all colors. I know not. Conanchet is a child among the cunning, and a man with the warriors. If this be true, he will look for his woman and boy in the happy hunting grounds, and they will come to him. There is no hunter of the Yengeese that can kill so many deer. Let Narra-mattah forget her chief till that time, and then, when she calls him by name, let her speak strong; for he will be very glad to hear her voice again. Go! A sagamore is about to start on a long journey. He takes leave of his wife with a heavy spirit. She will put a little flower of two colors before her eyes, and be happy in its growth. Now let her go. A sagamore is about to die."

The attentive woman caught each slow and measured syllable, as one trained in superstitious legends would listen to the words of an oracle. But, accustomed to obedience and bewildered with her grief, she hesitated no longer. The head of Narra-mattah sank on her bosom as she left him, and her face was buried in her robe. The step with which she passed Uncas was so light as to be inaudible; but when he saw her tottering form, turning swiftly, he stretched an arm high in the air. The terrible mutes just showed themselves from behind the tree, and vanished. Conanchet started, and it seemed as if he were about to plunge forward; but, recovering himself by a desperate effort, his body sank back against the tree, and he fell in the attitude of a chief seated in council. There was a smile of fierce triumph on his face, and his lips evidently moved. Uncas did not breathe as he bent forward to listen:—

"Mohican, I die before my heart is soft!" uttered firmly, but with a struggle, reached his ears. Then came two long and heavy respirations. One was the returning breath of Uncas, and the other the dying sigh of the last sachem of the broken and dispersed tribe of the Narragansetts.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Each lonely scene shall thee restore ;
For thee the tear be duly shed ;
Beloved till life could charm no more,
And mourned till pity's self be dead."—COLLINS.

AN hour later and the principal actors in the foregoing scene had disappeared. There remained only the widowed Narra-mattah, with Dudley, the divine, and Whittal Ring.

The body of Conanchet still continued, where he had died, seated like a chief in council. The daughter of Content and Ruth had stolen to its side, and she had taken her seat, in that species of dull woe, which so frequently attends the first moments of any unexpected and overwhelming affliction. She neither spoke, sobbed, nor sorrowed in any way that grief is wont to affect the human system. The mind seemed palsied, though a withering sense of the blow was fearfully engraven on every lineament of her eloquent face. The color deserted her cheeks, the lips were bloodless, while at moments they quivered convulsively, like the tremulous movement of the sleeping infant; and at long intervals her bosom heaved, as if the spirit within struggled heavily to escape from its earthly prison. The child lay unheeded at her side, and Whittal Ring had placed himself on the opposite side of the corpse.

The two agents appointed by the Colony to witness the death of Conanchet stood near, gazing mournfully on the piteous spectacle. The instant the spirit of the condemned man fled, the prayers of the divine had ceased, for he believed that then the soul had gone to judgment. But there was more of human charity and less of that exaggerated severity in his aspect, than was ordinarily seated in the deep lines of his austere countenance. Now that the deed was done, and the excitement of his exalted theories had given way to the more positive appearance of the result, he might even have moments of harassing doubts

concerning the lawfulness of an act that he had hitherto veiled under the forms of a legal and necessary execution of justice. The mind of Eben Dudley vacillated with none of the subtleties of doctrine or of law. As there had been less exaggeration in his original views of the necessity of the proceeding, so was there more steadiness in his contemplation of its fulfilment. Feelings, they might be termed emotions, of a different nature troubled the breast of this resolute but justly disposed borderer.

"This hath been a melancholy visitation of necessity, and a severe manifestation of the fore-ordering will," said the ensign, as he gazed at the sad spectacle before him. "Father and son have both died, as it were, in my presence, and both have departed for the world of spirits in a manner to prove the inscrutableness of Providence. But dost not see, here, in the face of her who looketh like a form of stone, traces of a countenance that is familiar?"

"Thou hast allusion to the consort of Captain Content Heathcote?"

"Truly, to her only. Thou art not, reverend sir, of sufficient residence at the Wish-Ton-Wish, to remember that lady in her youthfulness. But to me, the hour when the captain led his followers into the wilderness seemeth but as a morning of the past season. I was then active in limb, and something idle in reflection and discourse; it was in that journey that the woman who is now the mother of my children and I first made acquaintance. I have seen many comely females in my time, but never did I look on one so pleasant to the eye, as was the consort of the captain until the night of the burning. Thou hast often heard the loss she then met, and from that hour her beauty hath been that of the October leaf, rather than its loveliness in the season of fertility. Now look on the face of this mourner, and say if there be not here such an image as the water reflects from the overhanging bush. In verity, I could believe it was the sorrowing eye and the bereaved look of the mother herself!"

"Grief hath struck its blow heavily on this unoffending victim," uttered Meek, with great and subdued softness in his manner. "The voice of petition must be raised in her behalf, or——"

"Hist!—there are some in the forest; I hear the rustling of leaves!"

"The voice of Him who made the earth whispereth in the winds; his breath is the movement of nature!"

"Here are living men!—But, happily, the meeting is friendly, and there will be no further occasion for strife. The heart of a father is sure as ready eye and swift foot."

Dudley suffered his musket to fall at his side, and both he and his companion stood in attitudes of decent composure to await the arrival of those who approached. The party that drew near arrived on the side of the tree opposite to that on which the death of Conanchet had occurred. The enormous trunk and swelling roots of the pine concealed the group at its feet, but the persons of Meek and the ensign were soon observed. The instant they were discovered, he who led the new-comers bent his footsteps in that direction.

"If, as thou hast supposed, the Narragansett hath again led her thou hast so long mourned into the forest," said Submission, who acted as guide to those who followed, "here are we at no great distance from the place of his resort. It was near yon rock that he gave the meeting with the bloody-minded Philip, and the place where I received the boon of a useless and much-afflicted life from his care is within the bosom of that thicket which borders the brook. This minister of the Lord, and our stout friend the ensign, may have further matter to tell us of his movements."

The speaker had stopped within a short distance of the two he named, but still on the side of the tree opposite to that where the body lay. He had addressed his words to Content, who also halted to await the arrival of Ruth, who came in the rear supported by her son, and attended by Faith and the physician, all equipped like persons engaged in a search through the forest. A mother's heart had sustained the feeble woman for many a weary mile, but her steps had begun to drag shortly before they so happily fell upon the signs of human beings near the spot where they now met the two agents of the Colony.

Notwithstanding the deep interest which belonged to the respective pursuits of the individuals who composed these two parties, the interview was opened with no lively signs of feeling on either side. To them a journey in the forest possessed no novelties, and after traversing its mazes for a day the newly arrived encountered their friends as men meet on more beaten tracks in countries where roads unavoidably lead them to cross each other's paths. Even the appearance of Submission in front of the travellers elicited no marks of surprise in the unmoved features of those who witnessed his approach. Indeed, the mutual

composure of one who had so long concealed his person, and of those who had more than once seen him in striking and mysterious situations, might well justify a belief that the secret of his presence near the valley had not been confined to the family of the Heathcotes. This fact is rendered still more probable by the recollection of the honesty of Dudley, and of the professional characters of the two others.

"We are on the trail of one fled, as the truant fawn seeketh again the covers of the woods," said Content. "Our hunt was uncertain, and it might have been vain, so many feet have lately crossed the forest, were it not that Providence hath cast our route on that of our friend here, who hath had reason to know the probable situation of the Indian camp. Hast seen aught of the Sachem of the Narragansetts, Dudley? and where are those thou led'st against the subtle Philip? That thou fell upon his party we have heard; though further than thy general success we have yet to learn. The Wampanoag escaped thee?"

"The wicked agencies that back him in his designs profited the savage in his extremity. Else would his fate have been that which I fear a far worthier spirit hath been doomed to suffer."

"Of whom dost speak?—but it mattereth not. We seek our child; she whom thou hast known, and whom thou hast so lately seen, hath again left us. We seek her in the camp of him who hath been to her—Dudley, hast seen aught of the Narragansett sachem?"

The ensign looked at Ruth as he had once before been seen to gaze on the sorrowing features of the woman; but he spoke not. Meek folded his arms on his breast, and seemed to pray inwardly. There, was, however, one who broke the silence, though his tones were low and menacing.

"It was a bloody deed!" muttered the innocent. "The lying Mohican hath struck a great chief from behind. Let him dig the prints of his moccason from the earth, with his nails, like a burrowing fox; for there'll be one on his trail before he can hide his head. Nipset will be a warrior the next snow!"

"There speaks my witless brother!" exclaimed Faith, rushing ahead—she recoiled, covered her face with her hands, and sank upon the ground, under the violence of the surprise that followed.

Though time moved with his ordinary pace, it appeared to those who witnessed the scene which succeeded, as if the emotions of many days were collected within the brief compass of a few minutes. We shall not dwell on the first harrowing and exciting moments of the appalling discovery.

A short half-hour served to make each person acquainted with all that it was necessary to know. We shall therefore transfer the narrative to the end of that period.

The body of Conanchet still rested against the tree. The eyes were open, and though glazed in death, there still remained about the brow, the compressed lips, and the expansive nostrils, much of that lofty firmness which had sustained him in the last trial of life. The arms were passive at its sides, but one hand was clenched in the manner with which it had so often grasped the tomahawk, while the other had lost its power in a vain effort to seek the place in the girdle where the keen knife should have been. These two movements had probably been involuntary, for, in all other respects, the form was expressive of dignity and repose. At its side, the imaginary Nipset still held his place, menacing discontent betraying itself through the ordinary dull fatuity of his countenance.

The others present were collected around the mother and her stricken child. It would seem that all other feelings were, for the moment, absorbed in apprehensions for the latter. There was much reason to dread that the recent shock had suddenly deranged some of that fearful machinery which links the soul to the body. This effect, however, was more to be apprehended by a general apathy and failing of the system, than by any violent and intelligible symptom.

The pulses still vibrated, but it was heavily, and like the irregular and faltering evolutions of the mill, which the dying breeze is ceasing to fan. The pallid countenance was fixed in its expression of anguish. Color there was none, even the lips resembling the unnatural character which is given by images of wax. Her limbs, like her features, were immovable; and yet there was, at moments, a working of the latter, which would seem to imply not only consciousness, but vivid and painful recollections of the realities of her situation.

"This surpasseth my art," said Doctor Ergot, raising himself from a long and silent examination of the pulse; "there is a mystery in the construction of the body, which

human knowledge hath not yet unveiled. The currents of existence are sometimes frozen in an incomprehensible manner, and this I conceive to be a case that would confound the most learned of our art, even in the oldest countries of the earth. It hath been my fortune to see many arrive but few depart from this busy world, and yet do I presume to foretell that here is one destined to quit its limits ere the natural number of her days has been filled !”

“Let us address ourselves, in behalf of that which shall never die, to Him who hath ordered the event from the commencement of time,” said Meek, motioning to those around him to join in prayer.

The divine then lifted up his voice, under the arches of the forest, in an ardent, pious, and eloquent petition. When this solemn duty was performed, attention was again bestowed on the sufferer. To the surprise of all, it was found that the blood had revisited her face, and that her radiant eyes were lighted with an expression of brightness and peace. She even motioned to be raised, in order that those near her person might be better seen.

“Dost know us ?” asked the trembling Ruth. “Look on thy friends, long-mourned and much-suffering daughter ? ’Tis she who sorrowed over thy infant afflictions, who rejoiced in thy childish happiness, and who hath so bitterly wept thy loss, that craveth the boon. In this awful moment, recall the lessons of youth. Surely, surely, the God that bestowed thee in mercy, though he hath led thee on a wonderful and inscrutable path, will not desert thee at the end ! Think of thy early instruction, child of my love ; feeble of spirit as thou art, the seed may yet quicken, though it hath been cast where the glory of the promise hath so long been hid.”

“Mother !” said a low struggling voice in reply. The word reached every ear, and it caused a general and breathless attention. The sound was soft and low, perhaps infantile, but it was uttered without accent, and clearly.

“Mother—why are we in the forest ?” continued the speaker. “Have any robbed us of our home, that we dwell beneath the trees ?”

Ruth raised a hand imploringly, for none to interrupt the illusion.

“Nature hath revived the recollections of her youth,” she whispered. “Let the spirit depart, if such be His holy will, in the blessedness of infant innocence !”

"Why do Mark and Martha stay?" continued the other. "It is not safe, thou knowest, mother, to wander far in the woods; the heathen may be out of their towns, and one cannot say what evil chance might happen to the indiscreet."

A groan struggled from the chest of Content, and the muscular hand of Dudley compressed itself on the shoulder of his wife, until the breathlessly attentive woman withdrew, unconsciously, with pain.

"I've said as much to Mark, for he doth not always remember thy warnings, mother; and those children do so love to wander together!—but Mark is, in common, good; do not chide if he stray too far, mother—thou wilt not chide!"

The youth turned his head, for even at that moment the pride of young manhood prompted him to conceal his weakness.

"Hast prayed to-day, my daughter?" said Ruth, struggling to be composed. "Thou shouldst not forget thy duty to His blessed name, even though we are houseless in the woods."

"I will pray now, mother," said the creature of this mysterious hallucination, struggling to bow her face into the lap of Ruth. Her wish was indulged, and for a minute, the same low childish voice was heard distinctly repeating the words of a prayer adapted to the earliest period of life. Feeble as were the sounds, none of their intonations escaped the listeners, until near the close, when a species of holy calm seemed to absorb the utterance. Ruth raised the form of her child, and saw that the features bore the placid look of a sleeping infant. Life played upon them, as the flickering light lingers on the dying torch. Her dove-like eyes looked up into the face of Ruth, and the anguish of the mother was alleviated by a smile of intelligence and love. The full and sweet organs next rolled from face to face, recognition and pleasure accompanying each change. On Whittal they became perplexed and doubtful, but when they met the fixed, frowning, and still commanding eye of the dead chief, their wandering ceased forever. There was a minute, during which fear, doubt, wildness, and early recollections, struggled for the mastery. The hands of Narra-mattah trembled, and she clung convulsively to the robe of Ruth.

"Mother! mother!" whispered the agitated victim of so many conflicting emotions, "I will pray again—an evil Spirit besets me."

Ruth felt the force of her grasp, and heard the breathing of a few words of petition ; after which the voice was mute, and the hands relaxed their hold. When the face of the nearly insensible parent was withdrawn, to the others the dead appeared to gaze at each other with a mysterious and unearthly intelligence. The look of the Narragansett was still, as in his hour of pride, haughty, unyielding, and filled with defiance ; while that of the creature who had so long lived in his kindness was perplexed, timid, but not without a character of hope. A solemn calm succeeded, and when Meek raised his voice again in the forest, it was to ask the Omnipotent Ruler of Heaven and Earth to sanctify his dispensation to those who survived.

The changes which have been wrought on this continent within a century and a half, are very wonderful. Cities have appeared where the wilderness then covered the ground, and there is good reason to believe that a flourishing town now stands on or near the spot where Conanchet met his death. But, notwithstanding so much activity has prevailed in the country, the valley of this legend remains but little altered. The hamlet has increased to a village ; the farms possess more of the air of cultivation ; the dwellings are enlarged, and are somewhat more commodious ; the churches are increased to three ; the garrisoned houses, and all other signs of apprehension from violence, have long since disappeared ; but still the place is secluded, little known, and strongly impressed with the marks of its original sylvan character.

A descendant of Mark and Martha is, at this hour, the proprietor of the estate on which so many of the moving incidents of our simple tale were enacted. Even the building, which was the second habitation of his ancestors, is in part standing, though additions and improvements have greatly changed its form. The orchards, which in 1675, were young and thrifty, are now old and decaying. The trees have yielded their character for excellence, to those varieties of the fruit which the soil and the climate have since made known to the inhabitants. Still they stand, for it is known that fearful scenes occurred beneath their shades, and there is a deep moral interest attached to their existence.

The ruins of the block-house, though much dilapidated and crumbling, are also visible. At their foot is the last abode of all the Heathcotes who have lived and died in

that vicinity, for near two centuries. The graves of those of later times are known by tablets of marble ; but nearer to the ruin are many, whose monuments, half-concealed in the grass, are cut in the common coarse freestone of the country.

One, who took an interest in the recollection of days long gone, had occasion a few years since to visit the spot. It was easy to trace the births and deaths of generations, by the visible records on the more pretending monuments of those interred within a hundred years. Beyond that period research became difficult and painful. But his zeal was not to be easily defeated.

To every little mound, one only excepted, there was a stone, and on each stone, illegible as it might be, there was an inscription. The undistinguished grave, it was presumed, by its size and its position, was that which contained the bones of those who fell in the night of the burning. There was another, which bore, in deep letters, the name of the Puritan. His death occurred in 1680. At its side there was an humble stone, on which, with great difficulty, was traced the single word "Submission." It was impossible to ascertain whether the date was 1680, or 1690. The same mystery remained about the death of this man as had clouded so much of his life. His real name, parentage, or character, further than they have been revealed in these pages, was never traced. There still remains, however, in the family of the Heathcotes, an orderly-book of a troop of horse, which tradition says had some connection with his fortunes. Affixed to this defaced and imperfect document, is a fragment of some diary or journal, which has reference to the condemnation of Charles I. to the scaffold.

The body of Content lay near his infant children, and it would seem that he still lived in the first quarter of the last century. There was an aged man, lately in existence, who remembers to have seen him, a white-headed patriarch, reverend by his years, and respected for his meekness and justice. He had passed nearly or quite half-a-century unmarried. This melancholy fact was sufficiently shown by the date on the stone of the nearest mound. The inscription denoted it to be the grave of "Ruth, daughter of George Harding of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, and wife of Captain Content Heathcote." She died in the autumn of 1675, with, as the stone reveals, "a spirit broken for the purposes of earth, by much family

affliction, though with hopes justified by the covenant, and her faith in the Lord."

The divine, who lately officiated, if he do not now officiate, in the principal church of the village, is called the Reverend Meek Lamb. Though claiming a descent from him who ministered in the temple at the period of our tale, time and intermarriages have produced this change in the name, and happily some others in doctrinal interpretations of duty. When this worthy servant of the Church found the object which had led one born in another state, and claiming descent from a line of religionists who had left the common country of their ancestors to worship in still another manner, to take an interest in the fortunes of those who first inhabited the valley, he found a pleasure in aiding the inquiries. The abodes of the Dudleys and Rings were numerous in the village and its environs. He showed a stone, surrounded by many others that bore these names, on which was rudely carved, "I am Nipset, a Narragansett; the next snow, I shall be a warrior!" There is a rumor, that though the hapless brother of Faith gradually returned to the ways of civilized life, he had frequent glimpses of those seducing pleasures which he had once enjoyed in the freedom of the woods.

Whilst wandering through these melancholy remains of former scenes, a question was put to the divine concerning the place where Conanchet was interred. He readily offered to show it. The grave was on the hill, and distinguished only by a headstone that the grass had concealed from former search. It merely bore the words—"The Narragansett."

"And this at its side?" asked the inquirer. "Here is one also, before unnoted."

The divine bent in the grass, and scraped the moss from the humble monument. He then pointed to a line, carved with more than usual care. The inscription simply said—

"THE WEPT OF WISH-TON-WISH."



NRLF

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

This book is due on the last **DATE** stamped below.
To renew by phone, call **459-2756**
Books not returned or renewed within 14 days
after due date are subject to billing.

Series 2373

